THE SUPREME GODS OF THE BOSPORAN KINGDOM

RELIGIONS IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

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R. VAN DEN BROEK H.J.W. DRIJVERS
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VOLUME 135

THE SUPREME GODS OF THE BOSPORAN KINGDOM

Celestial Aphrodite and the Most High God

BY

YULIA USTINOVA

BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON · KÖLN
1999

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ustinova, Yulia.
The supreme gods of the Bosporan Kingdom : Celestial Aphrodite and the Most High God / by Yulia Ustinova.
p. cm. — (Religions in the Graeco-Roman world, ISSN 0927-7633 ; v. 135)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 9004112316 (cloth : alk. paper)
1. Kerch Strait Region (Ukraine and Russia)—Religion. 2. Gods—Kerch Strait Region (Ukraine and Russia)—History. 3. Gods, Greek—Kerch Strait Region (Ukraine and Russia)—History. 4. Aphrodite (Greek deity)—Cult—Kerch Strait Region (Ukraine and Russia)—History. I. Title. II. Series.
BL980.U38U88 1998
292.2'11'09395—dc21 98-21917
CIP

Die Deutsche Bibliothek - CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Ustinova, Julija B.:
The supreme Gods of the Bosporan kingdom : celestial Aphrodite and the most high God / by Yulia Ustinova. – Leiden ; Boston ; Köln : Brill, 1998
(Religions in the Graeco-Roman world ; Vol. 135)
ISBN 90-04-11231-6

ISSN 0927-7633
ISBN 90 04 11231 6

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

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PREFACE

Celestial Aphrodite and the Most High God dominated the pantheon of the Bosporan Kingdom in the first centuries AD. Epigraphic and archaeological data indicate that during the period following the wars of Mithradates Eupator the religious life of the Bosporus was focused on the worship of these two deities, which obscured the cults of other gods. This book is thus dedicated to a comprehensive study of the available evidence concerning Bosporan religion in the first–fourth centuries AD and is aimed towards unveiling its unique traits, created by the mingling of the cultural traditions of the Greeks and the indigenous peoples of the area.

Russian scholars before the revolution were well aware of the rule *Rossica non leguntur* and published their major works either in Latin or in modern Western European languages. After 1917 scientific publication in a foreign language became a difficult and sometimes even dangerous endeavor; until the reforms of the 1990's only a few works by Russian scholars appeared in the West. Inside the Soviet Union studies on Classical history, philology, and archaeology (the latter dealing mainly with the Northern Black Sea littoral) were extensively published, but as a rule remained unknown to Western colleagues. The situation is changing gradually, and a number of works by Russian scholars have appeared in the West, despite the harshness of research conditions in today's Russia.

The desire to write on Bosporan religion grew not only out of my wish to familiarize non-Russian readers with the results of research published in Russian, but emerged primarily because this subject has not yet been systematically treated, and numerous papers or brief remarks on Bosporan cult and mythology have failed to embrace the manifold aspects of this unique and fascinating phenomenon. I feel that the bulk of archaeological, epigraphic, and other evidence permits an inclusive study in a broad historical perspective, accounting equally for the Greek and the indigenous strands in the religion of the Bosporus. The later period in its history was chosen because it was then that this fusion manifested itself in its most conspicuous form. Aspects of early Bosporan and local cults are also discussed in the book.

It is a most pleasant duty to thank those who have in various ways helped me to bring the work to its conclusion. It would have never been written if I had not been introduced to Classical studies by the dedicated teachers of the Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) State University, first and foremost by Eduard Davidovich Frolov, Alexander Konstantinovich Gavrilov, Alexander Iosifovich Zaytzev, and the late Yuri Victorovich Andreyev, who untimely passed away in February 1998.

Stephen Mitchell, Ze'ev Rubin, and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge encouraged me and had the patience to read the entire draft of this book or its parts. Their valuable and most helpful comments and criticisms undoubtedly improved the original text. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for any shortcomings and errors which still remain. I am also very grateful to Stephen Mitchell for having kindly sent to me his yet unpublished fundamental study on *Theos Hypsistos*. Many other colleagues contributed valuable observations, which I acknowledge in the text of the book.

Warmest thanks are due to my friend and senior colleague at the Department of History of the Ben-Gurion University, Lucien (Uri) Poznanski for his aid and understanding at all the stages of this research. I wish also to acknowledge financial and other kinds of assistance from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Ben-Gurion University.

Ann Hurowitz edited the manuscript, revising and improving its English style. Alter Fogel reproduced the photographs, and Yelena Sokolowskaya prepared line drawings for the book.

Of my friends in St. Petersburg, I am indebted to Igor Schaub, who has kindly allowed me to use and cite his unpublished dissertation (Leningrad, 1987) on the cults of the early Bosporus. I also gladly acknowledge the help extended to me by Ilya Tupitzin and Maria Safronova, who provided me with publications I was unable to obtain in Israel.

Thanks are due to the staff of Brill Academic Publishers, first and foremost to Theo Joppe. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Editor of the present series, Henk S. Versnel, for reading my work and offering many helpful comments and amendments.

I am grateful to Akademic Verlag (Berlin) for the permission to reproduce plates 24, 25, and 27.

Finally, to Isaac Gilead, who first suggested that I write on Pontic cults, I owe a special gratitude for his unceasing support and help in every aspect of my undertaking.

Beer-Sheva, Israel
April 1998

INTRODUCTION

"Iranians and Greeks in South Russia." In these words Rostovtzev defines the main axis of the history of the Northern Black Sea littoral during the millennium beginning with Greek colonization until the final crash of Classical civilization there. Greeks and local Iranian-speaking peoples, known generally as Scythians, interacted from the seventh century BC onward. At times Greeks subdued Scythians, or alternatively Scythians subdued Greeks; trade and intermarriages have always existed. In the area of the Bosporus the process of ethnic and cultural fusion was initially more conspicuous than elsewhere, and it intensified on the eve of the new era. Thus, a study of Bosporan religion in the first centuries AD must focus on the mutual influence of Greek and local Iranian beliefs, mythology, and cults.

The name Cimmerian Bosporus (Strabo 11.2.5) was applied to the modern Kerch Strait, joining the Sea of Azov (ancient Maeotis) to the Black Sea (Pontus Euxeinus), and to the land on both sides of the strait (map 2). Greeks living in this area called it the Bosporus[1] and divided it into the European Bosporus, meaning the territories in the Crimea (Βόσπορος ὁ κατὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην, *CIRB* 29) and the Asiatic Bosporus, i.e. the northwestern Caucasus in the lower flow of the Hypanis (modern Kuban) River. The border between Europe and Asia extended further northward along the Tanais (Don) River, as Strabo (7.4.5; 12.3.27) states.

Discussion of the intricate history of relations between Greeks and Iranians on the Bosporus is obviously beyond the scope of the present study. The target of this introduction is to survey in most general terms the history of interaction between the Greek communities of the Bosporus and their indigenous neighbors. Furthermore, contrary to textual and epigraphic evidence, interpretation of iconographic material by many authors is rather arbitrary, and the lack of commonly accepted methods of symbolic exegesis renders the use of objects of art in a study of religion precarious and controversial. Therefore some observations on the significance and semantics of iconography will be made, which however do not pretend to be systematic or have a general bearing.

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[1] Βόσπορος: *CIRB* 1; 6; 6a; 7; 8; 10; 11; 25; 32; 39; 42; 971; 972; 1008; 1010; 1014; 1015; 1037 1040; 1042; 1111; 1204; Βοόσπορος: *CIRB* 40; 54; 56; 1047; 1048.

1 *Major Works on Greeks and Indigenous Peoples on the Bosporus*

The culture and political history of the Bosporus and of indigenous tribes, (Scythians, Sarmatians, and Sindo-Maeotians) have been investigated for more than two centuries,[2] producing a voluminous literature.

The history of the Greek cities of the Bosporus is discussed in several Russian comprehensive studies (Gaydukevich 1949; Blavatskiy 1964a; *AGSP*). In Western European languages, Latyshev's Latin introduction to *IOSPE* II and Rostovtzev's chapter on the Bosporan Kingdom in *CAH* (Rostovtzeff 1930) remain fundamental; the only detailed work, based on literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence, is still *Das Bosporanische Reich* by Gaydukevich (Gajdukevič 1971).

A corpus of Bosporan inscriptions wasfirst published by Latyshev (*IOSPE* II and IV), with a Latin commentary and an introduction to Bosporan history. In 1965 it was replaced by the new corpus (*CIRB*), containing an almost doubled number of inscriptions, with Russian commentary. New archaeological and epigraphic materials from the Bosporus continue to be published in periodicals;[3] in due time they appear in *SEG*.

The most extensive Russian exposition of the archaeology and history of indigenous cultures of the area is *Steppes of the European Part of the USSR in the Scytho-Sarmatian Period* (*SSSV*). During the last decades a number of English and German works on the subject have appeared (Rolle 1979; 1989; Černenko 1983; Sulimirski and Taylor 1991; Taylor 1994), which however do not supersede earlier works, primarily those of Sulimirski (1970; 1985). Minns' (1913) monumental volume is still the most detailed non-Russian account of the evidence both on the Scythians and on the Greeks of the Northern Black Sea littoral. Rostovtzev's (1918; 1925; Rostovtzeff 1936) classical works on Iranians and Greeks in South Russia, among them his English book (Rostovtzeff 1922), remain the sine qua non of any research on this subject.

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[2] Since the reign of Peter the Great, who in 1718 issued decrees concerning preservation of antiquities and their obligatory delivery to St. Petersburg. This monarch also founded the first Russian museum collection of antiquities. The first Russian excavations of a tumulus were carried out in 1763 (*SSSV* 36).

For the research on South Russian antiquities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see Rostovtzev 1993.

[3] Mainly in *VDI*, *SA* (now *RA*), *NE*, and *KSIA*.

An all-embracing work on the religion of the Bosporus remains to be undertaken. So far, the only comprehensive research which has been carried out is the unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by Shaub (1987a), dealing with the Bosporan cults of the sixth–fourth centuries BC. Other authors dwell on certain aspects of some cults, usually briefly and mostly in archaeological terms. Scythian religion is the theme of two monographs by Rayevskiy (1977b; 1985) and a book by Bessonova (1983), both authors combining in their investigations archaeological and literary data, and using extensive Indo-European parallels.

2 *Greeks on the Bosporus*

The main Greek city of the European Bosporus, Panticapaeum (modern Kerch), was founded by Milesians in the early sixth century BC. The name of Panticapaeum is of Iranian origin and means "fish way" (Abayev 1949: 170). The cities of Tyritaca, Nymphaeum, Cytaeum, Cimmericum, Theodosia, Parthenium, and Myrmecaeum were founded in the mid-sixth century.[4] In the Asiatic Bosporus Milesians founded Cepi already in the early sixth century BC; they probably participated in the foundation of Hermonassa, which was considered a colony of Mytilenaeans. The Milesian Sindian Harbor was later renamed and known as Gorgippia. Hermonassa was founded by Teos in the mid-sixth century BC (Gajdukevič 1971: 32–49; *AGSP* 10; Shelov 1994: 103–104). The far-away Tanais (map 1) in the delta of the Tanais (Don) River is the only Bosporan town founded by Bosporan Greeks themselves in the early third century BC (Shelov 1970: 15–25).[5]

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[4] A number of Bosporan cities were given non-Greek names: Cytaeum, Corocondame, Tyrambe, and later Iluratum (Gaydukevich and Kaposhina 1951: 165).

[5] For a discussion of debatable problems of Greek colonization of the Bosporus see Y. G. Vinogradov 1995.

Greek cities of the Bosporus, having started as independent *poleis*, united in 480 BC under the rule of an aristocratic family of Archeanactids. The exact nature of their half-century domination and its geographical extension are yet unclear (Gajdukevič 1971: 50–64; Shelov-Kovedyayev 1984: 70–81; Rostovtzev 1989a). In 438 BC it was superseded by a hegemony of Spartocids, a semi-barbarian hellenized family, to judge by their dynastic names, Spartocus, Pairisades, but also Leucon and Satyros. The exact provenance of this dynasty is disputable, but its connection with the local Bosporan aristocracy is well attested (Rostovtzeff 1919c: 97; Gajdukevič 1971: 65–96; Shelov-Kovedyayev 1984: 153–169; *AGSP* 13).

Magnificent fourth–third century BC tumuli of the Bosporus (Rostovtzev 1925) are usually divided into two categories: those containing almost purely Greek burials and those revealing connections with indigenous customs (*AGSP* 95–97). In any case, construction of tumuli hiding sumptuous vaults with princely goods was in no way typical of Greeks during this period (Gaydukevich and Kaposhina 1951: 168). This Bosporan tradition, which must have developed due to local influence, reflects the mixed ethnic origins of Spartocid aristocracy (Blavatskiy 1964a: 134; Melyukova 1979: 166–167). Moreover, indigenous elements penetrated Bosporan cities from their very foundation, as the considerable proportion of local pottery types in the inventory of urban households demonstrates (Y. G. Vinogradov 1995: 159–160). Local features were not uncommon in the city necropoleis, especially in the Asiatic Bosporus (Desyatchikov 1973: 71–75). Thus, the influence of the indigenous population on Bosporan culture is apparent already in the sixth–fourth centuries BC.

The Spartocids conquered Theodosia in the West and the Sindo-Maotian territories in the East, and Pairisades I (344/3–311/10 BC) bore the title of “archon of the Bosporus and Theodosia, king of all Sindians and Maeotians” (*CIRB* 10). Thus, the unification of Greek cities and local tribes in a territorial state took place on the Bosporus relatively early, in the first half of the fourth century BC. Greeks and indigenous tribes were obviously governed differently, Sindians and Maeotians were subjects of the early Spartocids, who nevertheless did not dare to use the title “king of the Bosporan Greeks.” However, from the third century BC, Bosporan rulers usually styled themselves as kings in regard to the population of Greek cities (*AGSP* 14). Greek cities, however, continued to strike their own coins, and local tribes, or at least some of them, enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy (Kolobova 1953).

The third and the second centuries BC witnessed tension and probably a coup d'état inside the Bosporan state, as well as a diminution of its prestige; it even paid tribute to barbaric kings (Blavatskiy 1964a: 127; *AGSP* 15). These developments, together with the strengthening of the Scythian state in the Crimea and the establishment of Sarmatian hegemony in the entire South Russian steppe, resulted in the downfall of the Spartocid dynasty and the subsequent incorporation of the Bosporus into the Pontic Empire of Mithradates VI Eupator in 107 BC (Gajdukevič 1971: 303–318).

The abortive attempt of the Bosporus to withdraw from Mithradates' empire in 80 BC ended in the appointment of Mithradates' son Machares as the governor of the Bosporus. After Mithradates' defeat by the Romans Machares sided with the latter; Mithradates, however, regained the Bosporus and began preparations for a renewed attack on the Romans. This crisis, together with economic instability and a blockade of Pontic ports by the Romans, resulted in an uprising against Mithradates, which was supported by his son Pharnaces and the army. The king committed suicide in 63 BC, and Rome acknowledged Pharnaces as a Bosporan king and a Roman ally (T. Reinach 1895: 296–300, 404–409; Blavatskiy 1964a: 128–129; Gajdukevič 1971: 319–324).

Pharnaces tried to reconquer the Pontic Empire, but after his defeat by Julius Caesar in 47 BC, lost the Bosporus to Asandros, who governed the country on Pharnaces' behalf. Notwithstanding Roman counteraction, Asandros established himself as an archon, and later a king of the Bosporus, married Pharnaces' daughter Dynamis and ruled till his death in 17 BC (Blavatskiy 1964a: 130–132). Subsequent events—the marriage of Dynamis to a Roman protégé, Polemo; their separation; her struggle against Polemo; and the assassination of Polemo—brought to power in AD 10 Aspourgos, in all probability Dynamis' son by Asandros (Rostovtzeff 1919c: 98–103; Gajdukevič 1971: 339–340; Y. G. Vinogradov 1992; 1994: 152–154). Aspourgos was affiliated with the Aspourgians, either one of the local tribes of the Asiatic Bosporus (Blavatskiy 1964a: 143; Gajdukevič 1971: 329) or a troop of followers of Aspourgos, whom he brought from Sarmatia and settled in the Taman peninsula (Rostovtzev 1919c: 103; Saprykin 1985).

In AD 14, with Tiberius' consent, Aspourgos proclaimed himself a king (*AGSP* 17). From then, Bosporan dynasts adopted dynastic names of Tiberii Iulii, always styled themselves "friends of Caesar and the Roman people" (φιλόκαισαρ καὶ φιλορώμαιος) in their official documents and depicted Roman symbols, for instance *sella curulis* or *arma equestria*, on their coins (Gajdukevič 1971: 336). However, Bosporan rulers enjoyed considerable independence in their domestic and foreign policy (Blavatskiy 1964a: 147–148), and large Bosporan cities preserved some elements of autonomy (Gajdukevič 1971: 359; Rostovtzev 1989b: 194–195).

Asandros married a Thracian princess, Gepaepyris (Rostovtzeff 1919c: 107–108),[6] and thus founded a new dynasty, which ruled the Bosporus for four hundred years, constantly emphasizing its connection with the Thracian royal house, with Mithradates the Great and the Pontic tradition, and with the indigenous peoples of the Bosporus. Dynastic names, such as Thracian Rhoimetalces, Rhescouporis and Cotys, local Bosporan Sauromates, and Pontic Eupator, clearly express this tendency (Rostovtzeff 1919c: 105–109).

The divine origin of the kings from Heracles and Poseidon, emphasized in several inscriptions,[7] was expressed also in the representation of the kings with the attributes of both ancestors on some coins of Sauromates II and Rhescouporis II (Burachkov 1884: pl. 30: 229; Rostovtzev 1913: 22–23; 1989c: 186; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 604, 605). Eumolpos and Poseidon were regarded as the forefathers of the Thracian ancestors of the Bosporan royal dynasty, while the appearance of Heracles most probably indicates that Bosporan rulers, like

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[6] It is suggested that as a result of his marriage to Gepaipyris Aspourgos adopted the Thracian name Rhescouporis and was therefore Rhescouporis I (Zograf 1951: 192, 196; Gajdukevič 1971: 338), which seems improbable (*IOSPE* II, pp. XLI–XLII; Rostovtzev 1913: 22; Rostovtzeff 1922: 153–155; Blavatskiy 1976; *AGSP* 17). Disagreement on this point leads to a discrepancy in the listing of Bosporan kings: there are those who consider Aspourgos as Rhescouporis I and consequently regard the king who reigned in AD 68–91/2 as Rhescouporis II; in their opinion, the last Bosporan king was Rhescouporis VI (AD 318/9–332/3?). The editors of *CIRB* express uncertainty in the chronological table (p. 832), but treat Aspourgos as Rhescouporis I in commentaries to relevant inscriptions. The present work adopts the approach of Rostovtzev and others, in whose view Rhescouporis I ruled in AD 68–91/2.

[7] *CIRB* 53, AD 216: [τὸν] ἀφ' Ἡρακλέου[ς] καὶ Εὐμόλπου τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος καὶ ἀπὸ προγόνων βασιλέων βασιλέα . . .; *CIRB* 980, second–third centuries AD, a similar formula partially restored; *CIRB* 1048, first–second centuries AD: [τὸν ἀπὸ Π]οσειδῶνος κα[ὶ ἀφ' Ἡρακλ]έους βασιλέα βασιλέων. . . .

Scythian kings, considered this hero their progenitor.[8] Heracles was depicted on a number of Bosporan coins, especially those struck by Sauromates II (Anokhin 1989: Nos. 607–614); Poseidon's trident and Heracles' club frequently occur as differentiators, shown on the reverse of Bosporan coins, near portraits of Roman emperors (Anokhin 1989: Nos. 629b, 630v, 631v, 632a, 632b, 633a, etc.).

The turbulent first century BC and early first century AD brought profound changes, known as the "Iranization" or "Sarmatization" of Bosporan society (Rostovtzev 1918: 168; Rostovtzeff 1919c: 109; Blavatskiy 1964a: 133; Desyatchikov 1973: 69). Local ethnic elements began their penetration into Bosporan cities already under the Spartocids, but it was after Mithradates Eupator that they became more and more dominant. Wars with Romans, Scythians, and Sarmatians and struggles within the house of Mithradates caused great damage to the Bosporus (Maslennikov 1980). The devastation inflicted by wars was completed by a tremendous earthquake in 63 BC, which destroyed cities and rural settlements all over the country (Blavatskiy 1964a: 129). The vacuum left by these events was replaced by newcomers, a considerable proportion of them being of indigenous origin. There were also Pontic Greeks and Thracians, but very few Romans (Blavatskiy 1964a: 135–139; Treister 1993). This process brought about modifications in everyday life, primarily the gradual rustification of Bosporan cities and their transformation into agricultural centers, and the deterioration of construction techniques (Blavatskiy 1964a: 135, 141, 152–160).

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[8] The deification of the Bosporan kings during their lifetime might be attested in the dedication, dated to AD 23, which was inscribed on a marble block belonging to the architrave of a small Doric building, probably a temple (*CIRB* 39; Blavatskiy 1957: 69; 1964a: 148).

Calling the king δεσπότης and σωτήρ (*CIRB* 40, 53, 1048, 1049) may hint at his deification as a savior god.

Apotheosis of Pairisades I is attested by Strabo (7.4.4), although from the text it is not clear whether he was deified before or after his death. Fragments of another dedication (*CIRB* 45), also inscribed on an architectural detail, a cornice, probably testify to the construction of a building in honor of Sauromates I (Blavatskiy 1964a: 164). Posthumous apotheosis of the Bosporan kings of the Roman period is implied by iconographic evidence (see 1.3.2.2 and 2.4.2.1). Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian noblemen were deified at least after their death, while Thracian kings claimed matrimonial relations with goddesses during their lifetime (below, 1.2.3.5). Therefore Blawatskiy's suggestion is quite plausible.

For the cult of sovereigns in the classical world see Cerfaux and Tondriau 1957; *GGR* 2: 132–184.

The royal house cultivated Iranian customs. The oriental style of the Bosporan court is probably best expressed by the fact that among other officials,[9] ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν εὐνούχων served there (*CIRB* 301, late first century BC–early first century AD), obviously heading a group of eunuchs. Further, the usual title of the Bosporan dynasts, βασιλεὺς βασιλέων, "king of the kings," copies the formula used in the documents of Iranian monarchs, beginning with the Achaemenids (Rostovtzeff 1919c: 109; 1989b: 186–187). A dedication for the victory and longevity of the king Teiranos and the queen Ailia (*CIRB* 36, the 70's of the third century AD) was set up by ἀριστοπυλεῖται. This word, meaning "courtier," derives from πύλαι, the royal palace (Latyshev, comm. to *IOSPE* II 29; Rostovtzev 1990a: 175):[10] the palace of the Persian king was in fact called αἱ θύραι by the Greeks (Her. 3.119; Xen. *Anab.* 1.9.3; *Hist. Gr.* 1.6.7).[11]

Relations between the Bosporans, the Scythians of Crimea to the west and the Sarmatians to the east were rather complex. On the one hand, during the first–second centuries AD Bosporans led constant wars against barbarians (Gajdukevič 1971: 335–358). It was in the mid-first century AD that the large fortress (or the small fortified town) of Iluratum was founded as a frontier stronghold, along with other rural citadels, which were essential for the security of the Bosporan-Scythian border (Gajdukevič 1971: 373–374). Finally, the Scythians were conquered (Gaydukevič 1971: 354), and Rhescouporis II (AD 210/1–226/7) proudly called himself "king of the entire Bosporus and of the Tauroscythians" (*CIRB* 1008). Sarmatians began their pressure on the Bosporus in the second century AD, destroying a number of settlements in the Asiatic Bosporus and inducing the central government to reinforce the fortifications of Tanais (*AGSP* 19).

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[9] For the administration of the Bosporus see Gajdukevič 1971: 360–366; Rostovtzev 1990a.

[10] Cagnat (*IGR* 1.817), after Boeckh, maintained that ἀριστοπυλεῖται is the local Bosporan for ἄριστοι πολῖται, which points to an underestimation of the Iranian element in late Bosporan culture. This transformation is unlikely from the phonetic point of view, as Y did not change into I even in late Bosporan Greek (Yaylenko 1977: 217).

[11] The connection between the Greek θύραι, πύλαι and the original Iranian usage, which was literally copied in Greek, beginning from the Classical and up to the Byzantine epoch, is treated in detail by Yaylenko (1977: 216–219).

Latyshev (comm. to *IOSPE* II 29), however, supposed *aristopyleitai* to be the royal guard. His interpretation was corrected by the publishers of *CIRB*, who observed that since civil officials, as ἀρχιγραμματεύς, ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων, are listed among the thiasotes, the word *aristopyleitai* means οἱ ἄριστοι οἱ ἐπὶ ταῖς πύλαις, including the entire elite of the kingdom.

On the other hand, annexation of these peoples resulted in their penetration into Bosporan cities, which gradually lost their predominantly Greek character. Ironically, the frontier town of Iluratum was inhabited mainly by natives, whose life style was conspicuously non-Greek (Gaydukevich 1958; Gajdukevič 1971: 409–411). The Bosporan army adopted Sarmatian tactics (Gaydukevich 1949: 410–411; Blavatskiy 1964a: 142). Changes in the population structure of Bosporan cities, as reflected in the archaeological record, are striking (Gajdukevič 1971: 439, 446). From the late first century AD onwards, quantities of handmade pottery of indigenous shapes, unearthed not only at Bosporan rural sites, but in urban sites as well, grew steadily. Many artifacts feature, or are shaped in the form of, so-called Sarmatian brands (Blavatskiy 1964a: figs. 60–61; Gajdukevič 1971: 447–450), which are likely to have served as personal signs (Solomonik 1959). Brands, presumably belonging to reigning kings, were carefully incised on many Bosporan stelae (*CIRB* 1053, 1241, 1249, 1250; Blavatskiy 1964a: 143–144).

The influx of new ethnic elements is obvious in the materials from the necropoleis of Panticapaeum, Phanagoria, Hermonassa, Cepi, and other Bosporan cities (Blavatskiy 1964a: 145). Gold decorations discovered there are usually polychrome, covered with precious and semi-precious stones (Rostovtzev 1922: 173; Blavatskiy 1964a: 188–189). Greek burial customs, such as the placing of *palestrites* ware into graves, were replaced with the barbarian practice of interment of weapons and pieces of horse harnesses. Funeral garments were often trimmed with numerous metal pendants of typically Sarmatian shapes (Gajdukevič 1971: 436–439; *AGSP* 62, 81, 85). Interment of arrowheads in female burials, as well as other characteristically Sarmatian customs, become common (Desyatchikov 1973: 70–71). Tombstones and wall paintings in Panticapaeum vaults frequently picture deceased Bosporans dressed and armed in a non-Greek fashion (plate 28; *KW; ADZh, passim*). The same tendency is apparent in the onomasticon of the Bosporus, with its growing proportion of names of Iranian origin,[12] sometimes given to sons by fathers bearing Greek names

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[12] Zgusta (1955) classifies names of Iranian origin into an ancient and a more recent strata; the former are considered as Scythian, and the latter as Sarmatian. Interestingly, Scythian names occur in other cities of the Northern Black Sea littoral, while Sarmatian names appear almost exclusively on the Bosporus (Blavatskiy 1964a: 136).

(Zhebelyov 1934: 45; Blavatskiy 1964a: 135–137). Amalgamation of Greek and indigenous features in all spheres looks complete.

The second and early third centuries AD were a period of stability and prosperity (Gajdukevič 1971: 355). This security was gained due to a constant readiness for military action on the part of the citizens, which finds its expression in the representations on tombstones, almost all of them portraying the deceased as warriors. Militarization and barbarization of civic life was indeed common in Pontic cities: it astonished Dio Chrysostomos, who visited Olbia on the eve of the second century AD, and described Olbiopolitai in his *Borysthenite oration* (e.g. 36.7) as never parting with their arms and wearing barbaric dress. Ovidius in *Tristia* (5.7.15; 5.10.30–35) complains that in Tomi most people, even those of Greek provenance, look like barbarians, speak local languages instead of Greek, and always carry arms (Rostovtzev 1989c: 125–126). Thus, the culture of the late Bosporus is to be understood not as a symbiosis, but as a synthesis of Greek and Iranian strands.

The prosperity of the Bosporus was abruptly ruined in the 30's–40's of the third century AD by attacks of Gothic tribes and destruction of Gorgippia and Tanais (Blavatskiy 1964a: 205–209; *AGSP* 20; Böttger 1996: 45). Some Bosporan kings ruling in the mid-third century AD, such as Pharsanzes and Chedosbios (Gajdukevič 1971: 470), were probably connected with the Goths. Numerous Bosporan rural settlements and smaller towns were abandoned; other sites show clear signs of deterioraion (Gajdukevič 1971: 459–479). Under Rhescouporis V, in the 30's or 40's of the fourth century AD, Bosporan coinage ceased (Blavatskiy 1964a: 215–222; *AGSP* 21). However, the final blow was inflicted by the Huns, who arrived in the Bosporus during the 70's and put an end to the thousand-year-old Bosporan history (*AGSP* 21).

3 *Iranians in South Russia*

The highly important role played by the indigenous peoples in the history of the Bosporus and its cults calls for a few remarks concerning their culture. Works of Abayev (1949; 1965), Harmatta (1951), and Zgusta (1955) demonstrate beyond doubt that Scythians and Sarmatians were peoples of Iranian stock, as Müllenhoff maintained already in the nineteenth century.[13] They spoke a number of languages and dialects, more closely related to each other than to any other Iranian language (Harmatta 1951: 286, 311; Zgusta 1955: 245–266; Abayev 1971).

More than two hundred years of intensive archaeological research has revealed abundant evidence on the culture of the local peoples of the South Russian steppe. Yet many important aspects are still controversial, including the definition of Scythian culture, the ethnogeny of Scythians and Sarmatians, and cultural similarities and dissimilarities between different ethnic units (Melyukova 1990; Moshkova 1990). Application of Indo-Iranian analogies, based mainly on the *Rigveda* and the *Avesta*, to the study of the Iranian peoples of the South Russian steppe is considered legitimate by the majority of scholars, but many theoretical and practical issues of the methodology of this comparison are still debated (Lelekov 1980). The attribution of archaeological sites to specific Scythian and Sarmatian tribes, mentioned by ancient authors, and the spatial distribution of these tribes are very problematic.[14] The situation is further aggravated by a fabulous lack of accuracy on the part of the ancient authors, who usually label as "Scythians" all the barbarians from the Danube to the Ural mountains, or use different names in respect to one people: thus, Sauromatians seem to be identical to Sarmatians (Rostovtzev 1925: 25; *SSSV* 154; Braund 1994: 168).

However, it is generally agreed that in the first millennium BC the vast Eurasian steppes, both to the east and to the west of the Ural mountains, were inhabited by related peoples, conventionally designated as Scythians (Moshkova 1994). Needless to say, in the course of their history Siberian Scythians were affected by influences different from those experienced by the Pontic Scythians, involved in the history of the Near East and the Classical world. Yet these peoples shared a common Iranian origin and revealed a striking cultural affinity. This similarity is traditionally believed to find its expression in what is called "the Scythian triad," consisting of typically Scythian arms (the short sword, *acinaces*, and the trilobate arrowhead), the Scythian horse harness, and the famous animal style in art, which has produced masterpieces amazing in their dynamism and expression.

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[13] Müllenhoff K., "Über die Herkunft und Sprache der pontischen Scythen und Sarmaten," *Monatsberichten des Königschen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* 1866(67). *Non vidi*; quotation after *SSSV* 37.

Some of the peoples described as Scythians by Herodotus most probably spoke non-Iranian languages: Finno-Ugrians inhabited the northern Ural area, and proto-Slavs and proto-Balts may have lived in the northern European forests; *cf.* Lelekov 1980.

[14] Cf. the four maps suggested by different authors in *SSSV* 42–43.

Pontic barbarians differ from many other non-literate societies in the fact that the modern scholar does not find them silent. They are occasionally mentioned in Greek and later Roman inscriptions and literary texts, ranging from Homer to Clement of Alexandria.[15] Most sources however are concerned primarily or exclusively with the confrontation of the Greeks and the Romans with these barbarians, and almost totally ignore their culture, which was described in detail only by Herodotus. Regrettably, he did not write much on Thracians, but Scythian customs are treated in the lengthy Scythian *logos*, incorporated in the fourth book of his *History* (chapters 1–142). Herodotus' report on Scythia appears to be based on authentic information. It seems quite certain that the Father of History did visit at least Olbia (see map 1),[16] or even the Scythian lands in the proper sense. He could acquire first-hand information from the Scythians living in

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[15] The most complete collection of ancient literary testimonies on the history of South Russia, including indigenous tribes, is the monumental *Scythica et Caucasica* by Latyshev (1893–1904), in which the texts are published both in their original language and in Russian translation.

For an analysis of the reliability of these sources see primarily Rostovtzev 1925, briefly summarized in Rostovtzev 1989d: 192–195. For the evidence on Sarmatians see also Kulakovskiy 1899.

[16] There is an almost unanimous agreement on this (Jacoby 1903: 256–258; Dovatur, Kallistov, and Shishova 1982: 9, 78; Neikhardt 1982; Gould 1989: 101; Pritchett 1993: 193). Rostovtzev (1925: 18) seems to be too cautious in his suggestion that Herodotus "may have visited" the Black Sea area. However, even those doubtful about the exact Black Sea itinerary of Herodotus find his account of the area "fairly reasonable" (Waters 1985: 26, 88). Armayor (1978), claiming that Herodotus never travelled to the Black Sea, is certainly hypercritical, and his argumentation remains unconvincing.

For an analysis of the hypercritical approach to Herodotus see Pritchett 1993; Pritchett (1993: 352–353) concludes his review with the following verdict:

> To stigmatize Herodotus as a liar and his "apologists" as credulous is to throw away at the outset the key to the interpretation of what he writes, to falsify history with our own anachronisms, and to treat as negligible what may be the most valuable thing in the narrative before us—the disclosure of the age when he lived. Herodotus was an observer of customs untrammeled by the desire to fit all that he had seen into a theory; a reporter of what he had seen even if he did not understand it, and of what he had heard, if it seemed for any reason worth reporting, without his necessarily believing it.

Olbia (Zhebelyov 1953: 31), not to mention the stories that the Olbiopolites certainly told him. Therefore Herodotus' description of Scythian culture is generally accepted as reliable (Zhebelyov 1953; Neikhardt 1982: 185; Rayevskiy 1985: 39, 73; Harmatta 1988: 121; Sulimirski and Taylor 1991: 553; Pritchett 1993: 191–226).[17] Scythian *logos* is heterogeneous, and its historical accuracy depends to a considerable extent on Herodotus' sources, which range from Scythian and Pontic Greek folklore to the historian's *autopsia* (Lelekov and Rayevskiy 1979). Comparison of Herodotus' record with archaeological data (Artamonov 1961; Bessonova 1983; Thordarson 1988) and evidence on the social and religious systems of other Iranian (Marinovich and Koshelenko 1977) or even more generally, other Indo-European peoples (Abayev 1962; Kuz'mina 1976; 1977a; 1977b; Rayevskiy 1977; 1985; Bongard-Levin and Grantovskiy 1983; etc.) has proved very fruitful. Ossetians, a modern Caucasian people descending from the Iranians of South Russia, have preserved in their epos and customs numerous ancient relicts, which allow Scythian cult and mythology to be envisaged in new light (Miller 1882; Abayev 1949; Kaloyev 1967; Dumézil 1978).

An outline, even in brief, of the provenance, early history, archeology, and culture of various Iranian peoples of the South Russian steppes is beyond the scope of the present book. Excluding the Siberian Scythians and the Iranian nomads of Central Asia, there still remains enormous documentation on the Scythians and related peoples who inhabited lands adjoining the northern and northeastern Black Sea coast.

In the beginning of the first millennium BC these regions were occupied mainly by Cimmerians, whose archaeological and linguistic attribution, unclear until recently (*SSSV* 10–16; Sulimirski and Taylor 1991: 555–560), has been elucidated by Ivanchik (1994; 1995), who makes a convincing case arguing that in archaeological terms they belong to early Scythian culture, and that they spoke an Iranian language. In the seventh–third centuries BC the steppe belonged to the Scythians proper. Scythian tribes lived in the country from the modern Dniester (ancient Tyras) to the Don (Tanais), including the

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[17] See, however, Marazov's criticism of Herodotus' account of Thracian religion (Fol and Marazov 1977: 24). For Herodotus as a historian of foreign religions see Burkert 1988. For the overall reliability of Herodotus' account of Thracian religion and his visit to the Western Black Sea littoral see Asheri 1988.

Crimea,[18] that is, the South Russian (or more accurately, mainly Ukrainian) steppe. In the sixth–fifth centuries BC Scythians were also present in the North Caucasus (*SSSV* 216–223). The area of the Kuban River in the North Caucasus and the Taman peninsula belonged primarily to the Maeotians, who were of either Thracian, Iranian, or aboriginal Caucasian stock (*SSSV* 225); the Maeotians had been subdued by the Sindians, in all probability of Scythian origin (Sulimirski and Taylor 1991: 572), so that tribes living in this area are frequently grouped together as Sindo-Maeotians.

The ethnic situation changed drastically in the late third century BC due to the appearance of the Sarmatians, another group of Iranian-speaking nomads who, in the fourth century BC, began their movement to the Pontic area from beyond the Ural mountains. True, Sarmatians were present in the Kuban region already in the fourth century BC (*SSSV* 35; 249–250; Sulimirski and Taylor 1991: 569), but it was the great Sarmatian migration of the late third century that drastically changed the ethnic map of the Northern Black Sea littoral (*SSSV* 155). Scythians were supplanted by Sarmatians everywhere but in the Crimea and in the adjoining area in the lower flow of the Dnieper (ancient Borysthenes; Shul'tz 1971; Kostenko 1983: 68–69). The domain of the new masters of the steppe stretched from the Tobol River in southwestern Siberia to the Dnieper, and some Sarmatian groups reached as far as the Danube (Skripkin 1982; Kostenko 1983: 74–77, 84; *SSSV* 156). This balance was disturbed only by new waves of nomadic invasions, by the Goths in the third century AD and the Huns in the fourth century (*SSSV* 158).

The archaeological record of early Scythian settlements is rather scarce, the earliest dated to the fifth century BC (*SSSV* 51–53, 59–60). The number of imposing sites grows after the late fourth–early third century BC, when a Scythian state in the Crimea was founded, with its capital located most probably in Neapolis Scythica (Vysotskaya 1979).[19] Scythian peoples however left numerous tombs, modest graves of common people and majestic tumuli of nobles. These monuments produce valuable information on the social life and religious beliefs of those who constructed them. Tumuli also produce gold and silver decorations of humans and horses, costly vessels, and other artifacts, as long as they had not been looted before being excavated (85% of the investigated tumuli were indeed visited by plunderers before archaeologists; Sulimirski and Taylor 1991: 550).[20] Despite the intrusions of robbers, skeletons of sometimes hundreds of horses and about a dozen attendants, timber burial chambers, etc. survived to prove that Scythian royal funerals were described by Herodotus (4.71–75) quite accurately (Thordarson 1988).

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[18] Except for its southernmost mountainous part, inhabited by the Taurians, a people whom the Scythians in all probability forced to move there from much vaster territories (*SSSV* 80–83).

[19] For a discussion of the ambiguous traditional identification of this site as Neapolis see Rayevskiy 1976.

The social and cultural history of the Scythian peoples is very complex and extremely controversial (Khazanov 1975b; Marčenko and Vinogradov 1989; *SSSV* 122–124), owing to the diversity of these peoples and the rapid transformations they underwent as a result of ethnic changes in the steppe and the impact of urban civilizations. Most Scythian peoples were semi-nomadic pastoralists, and some Scythians were sedentary agriculturalists (Corcella 1994). The provenance of different patterns of subsistence, their chronology, and development are not entirely clear (Rayevskiy 1995). Scythians were split into a considerable number of tribes, forming a sort of a hierarchy of tribes, headed by the so-called "Royal Scythians," the most valiant among them, who deemed all the Scythians their slaves (Her. 4.20).

It is more or less commonly accepted that Scythians were ruled by a military élite, fighting on horseback and led by kings, the royal title apparently being hereditary. The nature of royal power and its evolution are still debated (Melyukova 1990: 6–7). The king's authority was supported by a caste of priests and diviners. Rank-and-file people (or perhaps peoples, for the division between farmers and herders appears to have been ethnic) were also involved in warfare, at least in large-scale expeditions. Dumézil's (1930) theory on the tripartite division of the Scythians appears attractive and finds confirmation in several types of evidence on Scythian culture (Benveniste 1938; Grantovskiy 1970; Khazanov 1975b; Rayevskiy 1977).

Sarmatians were semi-nomadic herders (Kostenko 1983: 74–75; *SSSV* 202–205). Their aristocracy, buried in groups of rich tombs, separate from cemeteries of commoners (*SSSV* 168), appears to have been headed by chiefs, whose authority as charismatic leaders was probably becoming hereditary. By the second century BC Sarmatian tribes, possessing lands from the Don to the Ural mountains, joined large tribal unions, which solved their incessant conflicts by military means (*SSSV* 175; Braund 1994: 169). Cultural differences between various Sarmatian tribes appear as no less considerable than those distinguishing between Scythian tribes, every group having its own local tradition (Braund 1994). Contacts with Greek cities and the sedentary population of the North Caucasus intensified social and political changes in neighboring Sarmatian tribal unions (*SSSV* 209), and thus redoubled divergence between Sarmatian groups.

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[20] For a survey of burials see *SSSV* 51–66, with references. Luxury items are published in numerous catalogues of Scythian art, for instance Artamonov 1966; 1969; Piotrovsky, Galanina, and Grach 1987.

By the period of Greek colonization, Scythian women had already lost their former high status, but Greeks were still astonished by the independence and authority of women in other nomadic or semi-nomadic Iranian tribes of the South Russian steppes (Grakov 1947; Miroshina 1990; Taylor 1994: 395–397).[21] The bellicosity of Scythian women is attested by the discovery of weapons in their fifth–fourth century BC graves (Fialko 1991; cf. Taylor 1994: 395). Sarmatian women, who were reported not to marry before they killed an enemy (Her. 4.117), were regularly buried with arms (Grakov 1947; K. F. Smirnov 1964: 210; 1982; A. P. Smirnov 1971). Sarmatian women appear to have played an important role in cult, since inventories of a number of rich female tombs include such a large quantity of cultic objects (portable altars, incense-burners, etc.) that the deceased are considered to have been priestesses (*SSSV* 167–169; cf. Davis-Kimball 1997). The non-feminine warlike behavior of nomadic women induced the astounded Greeks to invent the legendary Amazons.

Scythians were exposed to foreign influence on several occasions. They made their first raids into Assyria in the 70's of the seventh century BC, after Cimmerians invaded Urartu, Assyria, and Phrygia in the late eighth–first half of the seventh century BC (Ghirshman 1954: 96–98; 1964: 42; Diakonoff 1985: 95; Sulimirski and Taylor 1991: 558–559; Ivanchik 1994; 1995). During the seventh century BC Scythians occupied the territory which later formed the satrapy of Media and participated in the military campaigns of the Assyrian and Median rulers, Scythian leaders marrying into the Assyrian royal family (Ghirshman 1954: 99; Diakonoff 1985: 97–109; *SSSV* 33–34;

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[21] The Sauromatians or Sarmatians (Her. 4.116–117; Ps.-Scyl. 70; Ps.-Hippocr. *De aere* 24; Polyaen. 8. 56), and the Massagaetae (Her. 1.205–214). For a detailed treatment of the ancient literary evidence see Miroshina 1990.

Sulimirski and Taylor 1991: 564–568).[22] This prolonged stay of a very considerable group of Scythians in highly civilized countries could not but modify their culture (Sulimirski and Taylor 1991: 569).

The next wave of important changes was initiated by the Greek colonization of the Black Sea. Military conflicts between the indigenous tribes and the colonies were inevitable, but trade developed to a great extent and by Herodotus' time Scythians could be met in Greek cities, Greek businessmen travelled in Scythia, and the Scythian nobility enjoyed Greek luxury goods and sometimes married Greek women (e.g., Her. 4.78). Scythians are reported to have despised Greek customs (Her. 4.76), but those who lived in the nearest proximity to Greek colonies became "Scythian Greeks" (῞Ελληνες Σκύθαι) or *Mixhellenes*, as not only Herodotus (4.17), but also archaeological evidence testifies.[23]

Contacts with the Near Eastern and Greek urban civilizations must have served as a catalyst which accelerated the development of Scythian society. The Scythian state is believed now to have emerged in the fifth century BC (Shelov 1994: 105). In the late fifth–fourth century BC King Ateas united under his power Scythian tribes over a vast territory (Strabo 7.3.18; Melyukova 1979: 241; *SSSV* 35). He struck his own coins and planned to extend his power further westward. Having conquered lands in Thrace,[24] he began to compete with Macedonia, but in 339, at the age of 90, was finally defeated by Philip II and perished (*SSSV* 35). This weakened the Scythians, who during the third century BC lost their dominant position over the steppes. In the late third century BC the territory of the Scythian state was restricted to the Crimea and the adjoining area (Strabo 7.4.7). The name of its king, Scilouros, is attested in a Greek inscription from a site identified as his capital, Neapolis Scythica (*IOSPE* I^2 668), and appears on his coins, struck in Olbia (Frolova 1964). In the second century BC Scythians even controlled Olbia for a short period (Gaydukevich and Kaposhina 1951: 179; Frolova 1964: 54). Notwithstanding military misfortunes, caused later by the

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[22] For a detailed analysis of evidence of the Scythian stay in the Near East see Vogelsang 1992: 94–179, 181–187.

[23] For a survey of Greek influence on Scythian culture see Khazanov and Shkurko 1978.

[24] Their extent is debatable, see Rostovtzev 1918: 34–36; Melyukova 1979: 241–242.

Sarmatians, the Scythian state continued till the Gothic invasion in the third century AD.

The Scythian involvement in the affairs of the Pontic Kingdom, and later the Roman domination, also left their marks. The results of these encounters however were less profound than those of the Scythian expedition to the Near East and the Greek colonization of the Northern Black Sea littoral.

Thus, notwithstanding the bulk of archaeological, narrative, and epigraphic data, the social and cultural history of the agglomeration of peoples, conventionally designated as Scythians and Sarmatians, remains controversial, due primarily to the diversity of ethnic units constituting this entity, and the lack of adequate historical sources focusing on the inner evolution of these societies. The resulting ambiguity concerning the religion of these peoples renders the estimation of its influence on the religion of Greek Pontic states a troublesome task. Yet in spite of these difficulties, the beliefs and cults of Greeks living on the Northern Black Sea littoral cannot be studied without an account of the indigenous cults, even if their interpretation is not always established firmly enough to be unequivocal.

4 *Objects of Art and their Interpretation*

Works of art are discussed extensively in the present study. Interpretation of objects of art in terms of their cultural or religious message is often problematic, even if they were produced by a culture which has left a written record, elucidating its religious notions and artistic conventions. When a work of art bears an inscription explaining it, or its personages are determined by their attributes, the situation is more clear. Yet the student of ancient art faces a double barrier, which divides between an ancient and modern culture, and between pictorial and spoken language.

Further troubles arise when objects of art lack these advantages, but the modern student nevertheless seeks to understand the symbolic meaning of an image. In the domain of Greek art several excellent works, such as those of Metzger (1951; 1965), Sourvinou-Inwood (1991), and Clinton (1992), to mention only a few, contribute greatly both to methodology and the practice of identification and interpretation of images. However, "reading Greek images" (to use an apt phrase coined by Sourvinou-Inwood) is a perplexing endeavor, and reaching its ultimate target, which is understanding Greek images the way Greeks themselves made sense of them, is scarcely attainable, owing to the above-mentioned cultural barrier in perception and the inadequate and ambiguous character of the sources. What one can do is only to approach this goal, the degree of comprehension depending on a variety of factors (Sourvinou-Inwood 1991: 9–10).

Thus, in many cases extreme caution is needed, and it seems that there are no general recipes for solving these problems. For instance, archaic and classical terracotta figurines of a seated woman and busts of a woman wearing a calathus occur all over the Mediterranean and are associated with sanctuaries of different goddesses (Alroth 1989: 65, 80–83, 112). Their attribution to a certain cult is therefore possible only when they are discovered in a specific cultic context. The same is true of many attributes of gods, such as wreaths, scepters, and some animals: since they are known to have been ascribed to more than one god, they cannot be used for the identification of unnamed deities. Hence, even in the identification of images an old-time *non liquet* is often preferable, or at most a reserved suggestion.

Generally, iconographic interpretation of objects of art must be based on the understanding of artistic conventions peculiar to a given culture. Systems of artistic images, conveying certain ideas, are usually rather stable within cultures. A semantic study deals with ideas, notions, and beliefs, ascribed to the images by their viewers (Sourvinou-Inwood 1991: 12). It must also account for evolution in imagery and mentality, especially dealing with frontier areas, as for instance the Northern Black Sea littoral.

The decoding of messages that art objects contain should proceed from the identification of attributes of individual characters to the analysis of mutual relationships between all the participants in the scene (cf. Rayevskiy 1979: 75–76) and their symbolic meaning. The application of the principle of isomorphism of distinct ideological notions is justified only if its occurrence in a given culture is attested by unequivocal evidence. The same is valid of symbols: although there evidently are some archetypal symbols which have a common meaning in many cultures, in every particular case the connotations of a symbol are to be studied within the specific culture it belongs to, and only after these have been established, may one proceed to intercultural comparisons. Exegesis of images is bound to be systematic and to account for a wide cultural context which determines their understanding. (The conviction of the necessity of a detailed analysis of the existing evidence resulted in the swelling of chapters and paragraphs treating iconographic matters in the present study.)

Finally, the fact that objects of art, produced in the Classical world, had symbolic meaning, is disputable, at least in respect to later periods, beginning from the Hellenistic age. For example, a motif which will be discussed in detail in Part I, so-called "peopled scrolls," in the opinion of Toynbee and Ward Perkins (1950: 7) turned into a purely decorative device in Roman Imperial art. However, these authors themselves acknowledge (1950: 5) that in funeral contexts this pattern "retained a definite symbolic significance." Now, it seems improbable that people, who bothered to represent their dead flanked by certain images, abandoned their belief in the importance of the design when it was depicted on non-sepulchral monuments.[25] It is untenable that in a society where the great majority of people believed in gods and regarded certain images as companions or attributes of gods, these very images could become cultically and culturally neutral.[26] Objects of art are therefore regarded in the present work not as pure decorations, but as reflections of notions current in a given society or in many cases even deliberate expressions of mythological concepts.

4.1 *Anthropomorphic Images in Scythian Art*

Scythian art was saturated with religious and mythological concepts and is therefore a most important source of evidence on Scythian religion. This presupposes that the imagery of Scythian art was not incidental, but was based on some symbolic language, and that this language may be interpreted by modern scholars. Principles of interpretation of Scythian art are discussed in a series of works, primarily by Rayevskiy (1977; 1985) and Kuz'mina (1976; 1983; 1984). Since almost all objects of art cited in the present work bear anthropomorphic images, origins and approaches to the interpretation of the Scythian and Sarmatian animal style (Artamonov 1966; 1971;

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[25] For the symbolism of Roman sarcophagi, see Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 581–617; for the religious significance of Roman decorative art, see also the discussion in Smith 1958: 495.

[26] Even today, in a society much more secularized than that of Imperial Rome, one may try a simple experiment: put a poinsettia in your living room in October, and guests will ask whether preparations for Christmas have already begun.

SSSV 100–104, 212–213; Dudko 1985) are not considered here.

Herodotus asserts that the Scythians did not erect images of their gods (4.59), and in regard to his time he was basically correct. Monumental stone idols, interpreted as representing either ancestors, tribal chiefs, or heroes, existed already in the seventh–sixth centuries BC, but almost disappeared towards the late fifth–early fourth centuries BC, that is, approximately in Herodotus' time (*SSSV* 104–106; Rayevskiy 1983; 1985: 136–145; Ol'khovskiy and Evdokimov 1994). In decorative art anthropomorphic imagery made its first appearance in Scythia in the seventh–mid-sixth centuries BC, following primarily the Near Eastern artistic tradition. Lukonin (1977: 21) defined this stage in Scythian art, which was based on direct adoption of foreign imagery, as a "style of quotations," but iconographic quotations were applied to the Scythians' own ideas and beliefs (Khazanov and Shkurko 1976: 43; Kuz'mina 1983: 98). Thereafter anthropomorphic images disappeared from decorative art for more than a century (Rayevskiy 1985: 100–102),[27] when only animals were pictured in elaborate scenes. However, animals and theriomorphic monsters perhaps represented mythological figures and concepts or their symbols (Rayevskiy 1978: 69), since both in the *Rigveda* and in the *Avesta* deities and notions are frequently described in zoomorphic terms, either in metaphors or in descriptions of their transformations (Khazanov and Shkurko 1976: 47; Kuz'mina 1976: 55; 1984: 95). Thus, the absence of anthropomorphic images in art does not necessarily imply their non-existence in mythology and religion.

In the late fifth century BC anthropomorphic images began to evolve anew under Greek influence (Grakov 1950:12; Ivanova 1954:

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[27] As a reason for this disappearance Rayevskiy (1985: 103–105) suggests that images of Near Eastern art were too rigid to be adapted to Scythian religion and mythology. But what made the representation of the goddess on the Kelermes mirror (late seventh–early sixth century BC) less acceptable than that of the later winged goddesses (below, 1.2.3.4)? It is unlikely that during one century the conservative Scythian society transformed so drastically that it could begin to adopt the notions that it had rejected not so long before, immediately after its exposure to the influence of Near Eastern civilizations during the stay of Scythians in Asia Minor. It is also improbable that all the seventh–sixth century BC objects of art were manufactured by artisans captured in the expedition, after whose natural death all artistic activity ceased (Rayevskiy 1985: 104). First of all, Scythians themselves were capable of creating primitive anthropomorphic representations; and secondly, since Scythians found imported Greek metalware suitable for their purposes in the late fifth century BC, they could just as easily have utilized them fifty years before that. The cause for this change of attitude is therefore still obscure.

227; Bessonova 1983: 81). This artistic expression of the anthropomorphic conceptions of the divine world is to be distinguished from the conceptions themselves (cf. Kuz'mina 1983: 98). Scythian religion and mythology did not emerge exceptionally under Greek influence (El'nitzkiy 1960: 52; Artamonov 1961: 82–83), but ripened gradually, as a result of the intrinsic development of Scythian tradition (Rayevskiy 1978; 1985: 88–90; 156), which was certainly subjected to Anatolian and Greek influences. While the artistic shaping of Scythian divinities was in most instances Greek (Prushevskaya 1955; Blavatskiy 1964b; Bessonova 1983: 80; *SSSV*: 119), Iranian ideology is often discernible under the Greek appearance, and in certain cases Iranian artistic tradition, too: Scythian art was also related to that of Luristan (Ghirshman 1962: 258; 1964: 301–329; 1976: 100–101; Bessonova 1983: 82).[28] It is noteworthy that the shapes of vessels of Greek manufacture, discovered in Scythian complexes, are typically Scythian; numerous objects were executed as decorations of Scythian dress and headgear (pendants, etc.) or horse harnesses (Rayevskiy 1978: 65). Thus, most objects of art were intentionally executed by Greek artisans according to Scythian preferences and probably in accordance with Scythian orders (Rayevskiy 1978: 65; *SSSV* 118–119). It is always possible that some details did not exactly reflect Scythian ideas, but in the majority of cases even minor details have parallels in Scythian, or more broadly, Iranian mythology and ritual. Picked out of their native semantic system, images which are applied to notions of a different culture acquire new values (Kuz'mina 1983: 98). Even purely Greek images, when found in Scythian or Sindo-Maeotian archaeological contexts, appear to connote local mythological characters (Grakov 1950: 15; Blavatskiy 1964b, 4: 19–20; Bezsonova 1975; 1985: 163–167, 173–177), and not necessarily testify to Graeco-Scythian syncretism (Blavatskiy 1964b: 2.18; 4.26). Just as Herodotus identified Scythian deities with Greek gods, Scythians were able to recognize their ancestral gods in Greek images (Rayevskiy 1978: 65).

Interpretation of objects of art left by Scythians, or generally Iranian peoples of South Russia, rests on the following principles: the comparison of the iconographic evidence with Greco-Roman literary and epigraphic data; its confrontation with Iranian and, further, Indo-European tradition; and its examination from the point of view of universal archetypes (Rayevskiy 1979: 71–72; 1985: 14–32). This procedure must be systematic: a symbol must be comprehended within its contexts, starting from the composition and proceeding to the archaeological complex and the culture in general. This kind of treatment of iconographic material left by the Scythians may reveal important aspects of their mythology and religion.

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[28] For Luristan art see Godard 1931. For the discussion of its chronology see especially Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 33–38.

PART ONE

GODDESSES OF THE BOSPORUS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Great Goddess of the Bosporus, from the beginning of its colonization by the Greeks to the end of the ancient epoch, was Aphrodite *Ourania.* The earliest dedication to this goddess (*CIRB* 1111) is dated to the first half of the fourth century BC, while the last was offered to her in AD 243 (*CIRB* 35). In the first centuries AD Aphrodite *Ourania* was the tutelary goddess of the Bosporus, the guardian of its kings and their subjects, the grantor of power and victory in battle, the supreme cosmic deity of this world and the protectress of the dead in the nether world, and a great fertility-goddess, reigning the vegetal and animal kingdoms. This majestic divinity evolved as an amalgamation of two goddesses who bore the same Greek name, Aphrodite *Ourania*: the Bosporan Aphrodite *Ourania*, the Mistress of Apaturum, worshipped by the Greeks of the area almost from the onset of their settlement on the shores of the Bosporan strait; and the native Great Goddess, whose Scythian name was Argimpasa, and who was identified with Aphrodite both by the Greeks and by the indigenous peoples themselves.

This combination of the two divine manifestations demands a separate study of each, in order to appreciate their impact on the resulting phenomenon, the late Bosporan cult of Aphrodite *Ourania.* Part I is therefore divided into three chapters: Chapter 1 discusses the Greek goddesses of the Bosporus, Chapter 2 deals with the indigenous cults of the goddesses, and Chapter 3 analyzes the Great Goddess cult in the late Bosporan Kingdom. The goal of the examination of the cults of Bosporan goddesses in the sixth–early first centuries BC is to define their role and importance in the emergence of the later cult of Aphrodite *Ourania.* Although a number of goddesses were worshipped in the Greek cities of the Bosporus, Aphrodite was the leading, yet not totally dominant deity, the only one who had distinct local connections even at this stage. The inquiry into the ritual, iconography, and mythology of the native goddesses of Scythia (in a wide sense, including other Iranian peoples of the South Russian steppes) demonstrates that only Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* developed a powerful divine personality, involving such realms as fertility, royal power, and the celestial and chthonic worlds. Later, the massive influx of Iranians—Scythians, Sarmatians and Sindo-Maeotians—into the Bosporan cities brought about profound changes in the culture and religion of the kingdom, giving rise to the blending of Greek and native elements. As a result, the image of Aphrodite *Ourania*, venerated on the Bosporus in the first centuries AD, integrated both Greek and indigenous traits. These features may be traced in the epigraphy, coinage, iconography, and archaeology of the monuments related to the cult of the goddess.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GREEK GODDESSES OF THE BOSPORUS IN THE SIXTH–EARLY FIRST CENTURIES BC

1.1.1 *Aphrodite Apatouros*

1.1.1.1 *Apaturum and Its location*

Apaturum is the name of a famous sanctuary of Aphrodite *Ourania*, which was situated on the Asiatic side of the Bosporus. The exact location of the sanctuary is still disputed. Aphrodite *Ourania*, the mistress of Apaturum, was also worshipped in the European Bosporus. Although her official title was 'Αφροδείτη Οὐρανίη 'Απατούρου μεδεούση, she was referred to also as 'Αφροδίτη 'Απατουριάς (*CIRB* 1045), and 'Αφροδίτη ἡ 'Απάτουρος by Strabo (11.2.10).

The earliest literary evidence of the existence of the site goes back to Hecataeus (late sixth–early fifth century BC):

> Steph. Byz., s.v. 'Απάτουρον· τὸ τῆς 'Αφροδίτης ἱερὸν ἐν Φαναγορίᾳ, Στράβων ἑνδεκάτῃ . . . 'Εκαταῖος δὲ κόλπον οἶδε τὸν 'Απάτουρον ἐν τῇ 'Ασίᾳ . . .
>
> Apaturum: the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Phanagoria, mentioned by Strabo in the Eleventh book . . . Hecataeus knew also a bay of Apaturum in Asia . . .

It seems that Stephanus wants to emphasize the difference between the data of Strabo, who mentioned the *sanctuary* of Aphrodite, and that of Hecataeus, who knew of a *bay* of Apaturum (Tolstoy 1909: 218).

In fact, Strabo writes that a traveler entering Corocondamitis (which is the modern bay of Taman;[1] see map 2) might reach Phanagoria and Cepi, and also Hermonassa and Apaturum, the sanctuary of Aphrodite (11.2.10):

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[1] Κοροκονδαμῖτις is mentioned several times in a number of ancient sources and is generally considered to be the modern bay of Taman (see Tokhtas'yev 1986: 139, with a detailed analysis of the relevant ancient evidence and the modern views on the subject).

> Εἰσπλεύσαντι δ' εἰς τὴν Κοροκονδαμῖτιν ἥ τε Φαναγόρειά ἐστι, πόλις ἀξιόλογος, καὶ Κῆποι καὶ Ἑρμώνασσα καὶ τὸ Ἀπάτουρον, τὸ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἱερόν ...
>
> Sailing into Corocondamitis one reaches Phanagoria, a noteworthy city, and Cepi, and Hermonassa, and Apaturum, the sanctuary of Aphrodite ...

In the same passage he mentions the second sanctuary of Aphrodite:

> Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ Φαναγορίᾳ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἱερὸν ἐπίσημον τῆς Ἀπατούρου.[2]
>
> There is also in Phanagoria a remarkable sanctuary of Aphrodite *Apatouros*.

In the first century AD Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* 6.6.18) listed:

> *oppida in aditu [Bospori primo] Hermonasa, dein Cepoe Milesiorum, mox Stratoclia et Phanagoria ac paene desertum Apaturos ...*
>
> The towns at the entrance [of the straits of Bosporus] are [first] Hermonassa, then the Milesian Cepi, next Stratoclia and Phanagoria and the almost deserted Apatouros ...

Since the order of towns in this list does not reflect their geographic location (from south to north: Hermonassa, Phanagoria, Cepi, see map 2), the only point that may be drawn from this reference is that Apaturum is mentioned among *coastal towns*, which means, first, that it cannot be placed in the hinterland, and second, that there was a settlement around the sanctuary. As to the desertion of the site mentioned by Pliny, it was very short, since in the second century AD Ptolemy (5.8.2) already mentioned Apaturum,[3] and the second–third centuries AD witnessed the apex of its fame and prosperity.

These passages are interpreted in different ways. Some place Apaturum far inside the Taman peninsula (Rozanova 1951, Gajdukevič 1971: 228; Marchenko 1974b: 31), although Strabo definitely implies that the sanctuary was situated on the seashore. The attempts to identify Apaturum with an archaeological site have failed. Marchenko

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[2] Ἀπατούρου in this text cannot be a genitive of Ἀπάτουρον: it is obvious both from the construction of the phrase and from its continuation, ἐτυμολογοῦσι δὲ τὸ ἐπίθετον τῆς θεοῦ ...

[3] The place is named Ἀπάτουρος only in one manuscript (Cod. X, Vat. 191) and in the *editio princeps* of Erasmus (1533); elsewhere it appears as Ἀπάτουργος, which is an obviously erroneous interpretation of an obscure toponym based on a connection to ἀπάτη. Ptolemy's coordinates of Apaturum, placing it in the northern Taman peninsula, are certainly inaccurate (for a detailed analysis of Ptolemy's data see Tokhtas'yev 1986: 143–145).

(1962; 1977) associates a hypothetical shrine on Mayskaya (formerly Blevaka) hill with Apaturum, although it is unprovable: thus far, several hundred terracottas fragments of figurines of different goddesses from the sixth–second centuries BC have been found there in a favissa, but almost no architectural remains associated with them have yet been discovered.[4] The suggestion of Sokol'skiy (1976: 78–80), that the fortified mansion which he excavated in northern Taman is Apaturum, is even more fantastic: the location of the site, as well as the archaeological remains themselves, are obviously inconsistent with the ancient tradition on Apaturum. Hence, in the present state of our knowledge the only way of locating the sanctuary is through the interpretation of the relevant literary evidence.

Apaturum must have been situated on the coast of the Corocondamitis bay, not far from Hermonassa. This was first suggested by Rostovtzev (1918: 124; 1925: 280); Tokhtas'yev (1986) developed this view and supported it with a comprehensive analysis of the data. Combining information of Hacataeus and Strabo leads to the conclusion that the sanctuary named Apaturum was located on the shore of a small harbor, constituting a part of Corocondamitis. This harbor cut into the coast of the ancient island[5] of Hermonassa near the city of the same name. At present there is no harbor in the vicinity of Hermonassa. The ancient harbor has presumably disappeared due to erosional processes in the region (Tokhtas'yev 1986: 141).

Thus, by the end of the sixth century BC the sanctuary at Apaturum had already been founded (cf. Gajdukevič 1971: 226). The sanctuary continued to bear this name for almost a thousand years, while the name of the harbor was gradually forgotten; at least it was never mentioned after Hecataeus.

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[4] The definition of obscure traces of a building unearthed there (Marchenko 1960; 1962; 1977) as a temple *in antis* is certainly too far-fetched.

[5] In antiquity the southern part of the modern Taman peninsula was composed of a group of small isles and was called the island of Hermonassa (Strabo 11.2.10; cf. Shelov-Kovedyayev 1984: 34).

1.1.1.2 *The Cult of Aphrodite Apatouros as Reflected in the Early Epigraphic Evidence*

The earliest epigraphic document, where the word *Apatouros* or its derivative was used, is dated to the fifth century BC (*CIRB* 1234).[6] In 1712 a French traveler, A. de la Motraye, found a stele with an inscription and a relief in an unidentified location on the Asiatic side of the Bosporus. He published the engraving of the inscription and the bas-relief[7] with the figures of a nude Aphrodite, Heracles, Poseidon, Eros, and one more character. This scene fits much more the style of the eighteenth-century illustrations in lexicons of *Images and Symbols* than the letter-shapes as depicted in the same engraving, which are undoubtedly of the early fifth century BC.[8] The stone disappeared in the nineteenth century, and today there is no way of reconstructing either the real images that were represented on the stele, or the exact contents of the inscription, which reads θε[ῶι] Ἀπατο(ύ)ρω[ι . . .] μαχ[ος Κ]αρν[ειά]δ[εω]?, according to *CIRB* and *IOSPE*, and θε[ᾶι] Ἀπατόρο μ[εδεούσηι ὁ δεῖνα], according to Tolstoy (1909: 221).

However, there are three firmly established facts about this monument: it was found on the Asiatic side of the Bosporus; it dates to the early fifth century BC, and it contained the word ΑΠΑΤΟΡΟ.

There is much more epigraphic evidence from the fourth century, most inscriptions coming from the Asiatic Bosporus. *CIRB* 7, 13 (marble stelae) and *CIRB* 17 (marble pedestal) are dedications to Aphrodite (without any epithet) from Panticapaeum. From Phanagoria two marble statue bases originate, *CIRB* 971, with a dedication to Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa*, and *CIRB* 972—to Aphrodite *Ourania*. It is reasonable to believe that these inscriptions were related to the sanctuary which must have been founded long before Strabo reported its existence (ἱερὸν ἐπίσημον of 11.2.10).

A fourth-century BC marble pedestal from Hermonassa (*CIRB* 1041) attests to a dedication of a statue to Aphrodite (no epithet has been preserved on the fragment), evidently by a member of the royal family, perhaps a daughter of Pairisades I—it is the first in the line of royal dedications to the goddess. Only a fragmentary marble base of another statue, a votive offering to Aphrodite, has been preserved (*CIRB* 1043, 304/3–284/3 BC).

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[6] The earliest evidence of the cult of Aphrodite on the Bosporus is a sixth-century BC graffito from Cepi with the dedication of a priest to Aphrodite (Sokol'skiy 1973: 90). A number of graffiti with the abbreviated (or fragmented) name of Aphrodite date to the fifth century: from Cepi (Sokol'skiy 1973: 92), Myrmecaeum (Gaydukevich 1987: 69), and Nymphaeum (Tolstoy 1953: No. 114); see Shaub 1987a: 89.

[7] *Voyage du S-r A. De la Motraye en Europe, Asie et Afrique*, A la Haye, 1727, vol. 2, Pl. IV, 11, 12—*Non vidi*, quoted after Tolstoy 1909: 216.

[8] For the date see the commentaries to *CIG* II 2133; *IOSPE* II 469; *CIRB* 1234.

CIRB 1111 is a badly damaged double herm with an inscription on its tetrahedral shaft. It was found near the Tzukuruk salt lake, to the south of Hermonassa. The dedication of Demarchos son of Scythes to Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* was made in the first half of the fourth century BC.[9] Only the folds of a garment are preserved on one side of the herm, that of the inscription; nevertheless this monument can shed some light on the character of the cult, as Shaub (1987a: 90–93) has demonstrated.

Since the double herm is an offering to Aphrodite, one of its two faces must have been that of the goddess. Herms of Aphrodite (Delivorrias 1984: 10–12) were not unknown on the Bosporus. A herm is represented on a gravestone featuring Aphrodite (or her priestess) and Eros, with a temple of the goddess in the upper register (plate 13).[10] A herm of a nude Aphrodite appears also on an imported red-figure *lekanis* cover, found in one of the Yuz-Oba tumuli (Shaub 1987a: 90).

The Hermonassa double herm has no exact parallels, although there are some Attic vases in the form of a head with two faces, of Aphrodite and a black African (Delivorrias 1984: 109, No. 1081).[11] The practice of placing side-by-side herms of Aphrodite and of a male deity, such as Hermes or Dionysos, is also well-attested in terracotta (Delivorrias 1984: 11, No. 19) and vase painting (Delivorrias 1984: 127, No. 1334; Shaub 1987a: 90).[12] A marble figurine of Aphrodite supported by a male herm (Delivorrias 1984: 45, No. 337) is also noteworthy. As to the Bosporus, a number of terracottas portray Aphrodite sitting near herms (plate 1; *TSP* 3: pls. 23: 2, 6; 25: 4, 5; 26).[13]

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[9] Δήμαρχος Σκύθεω| ἀνέθηκεν Ἀφροδίτη[ι] Οὐρανίηι Ἀπατούρο| μεδεούσηι| ἄρχοντος| Λεύκωνος Βοσπόρ[ο] καὶ Θεοδοσίης. Leucon I ruled in 389/8–349/8 BC.

[10] Different authors date this monument between the second century BC to the second century AD; for the discussion see below, 1.3.2.2.

[11] Double herms of other deities are also known; especially common are those portraying Dionysos and Ariadne (Cook 1914–40, 2: 390–392, pl. 21; fig. 299).

[12] For the cult and iconography of the bisexual Hermaphrodites see Delcourt 1958. This image was not just a product of wild imagination: today, the birthrate of intersex babies is rather high, between one and two per thousand (Taylor 1996: 64, with references to modern medical literature). The estimation cited by O'Flaherty (1980: 291), between two and three percent, is apparently fantastic.

This form also indicates the chthonic nature of the cult (Delivorrias 1984: 108; Shaub 1987a: 91). Chthonic symbolism of the herms finds an interesting parallel in the depictions of Aphrodite's head or bust rising from the earth (*anodos*)[14] on a number of so-called Kerch-style vases, that were discovered in Kerch and its vicinity, mostly in tombs (Metzger 1951: 72–92; Shaub 1987a: 99), and which were probably executed in accordance with Bosporan tastes and beliefs (Metzger 1951: 85). The chthonic aspect in the cult of Aphrodite is also expressed in burial practices: numerous representations of the goddess herself or Eros, mainly terracottas, but also pieces of jewelry, were deposited in tombs. In addition, Eros holding a garland of flowers was represented on a mural in one of the Bosporan vaults (second-first centuries BC, *ADZh*: 146, 149).[15]

Like Aphrodite *Ourania* of the Bosporus, the Greek Aphrodite had chthonic aspects: her *anodos* was painted on a series of art objects (Metzger 1951: 72–89; Bérard 1974: 153–160). In Epidaurus a double altar was inscribed: Ἀφροδίτας Μιλιχίας. Δι[ὸς Μιλιχίου] (*IG* IV^2 282; fourth–third century BC); in Metapontum, a dedication was offered to Aphrodite *Milichia* (*SEG* 38.997; fourth–third century BC). This Aphrodite, the Kindly or Mild One, was probably believed to be endowed with power over the subterranean world (Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 174), as was Zeus *Milichios* (Cook 1914–40, 2: 1091–1160; *GGR* 1 411–414; Burkert 1985: 201). In Delphoi, Aphrodite was worshipped as Ἐπιτυμβία (Plut. *Mor.* 269 B; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 299). In Thessaly, there was a sanctuary of Aphrodite *Anosia* or *Androphonos* (Athen. 589 AB; Plut. *Mor.* 767F–768A; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 235). And yet Greek Aphrodite appears to be scarcely related to the chthonic realm (Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 442). Contrary to the common Greek practice, on the Bosporus Aphrodite seems to be much more involved in the underworld beliefs.

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[13] A striking utterance of the association of herms with androgyny is a terracotta, in all likeliness produced on the Bosporus, and discovered in a first-century AD indigenous burial in the Lower Dnieper area (Symonovich 1981: 117, pl. 1). The figurine, shaped as a herm with male genitals, has a female head, with a radiate nimbus resembling that of an earlier Bosporan terracotta of Aphrodite (plate 3).

[14] For the symbolism of *anodos* in Greek art in general see Bérard 1974.

[15] See Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 98 on the chthonic aspect of Aphrodite in Corinth and elsewhere.

It should be emphasized that prior to the third century BC the cult of Aphrodite is not attested epigraphically either in Miletos, the metropolis of Panticapaeum and most other colonies of the Bosporus (Ehrhardt 1983: 164),[16] or in Teos, the metropolis of Phanagoria (Ruge 1934; Yaylenko 1977: 221).[17] The stimulus for the emergence of this cult on the Bosporus, and especially on the Asiatic shore, is to be sought in the influence of local tradition, which made itself felt already in the early stages of the evolution of the cult.

1.1.1.3 *Aphrodite Ourania in Greek Tradition*

Ourania as an *epiklesis* of Aphrodite was common all over the Greek world (Pirenne-Delforge 1994: passim), and indicated an emphasis on the Oriental connections of the goddess (*GGR* 1 520; Herter 1960: 65; Boedeker 1974: 3–6; Flemberg 1991: 13; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 66, 217–219; Penglase 1994: 162–163; Bonnet 1996: 150).[18] Aphrodite *Ourania* appears as the Greek counterpart of the Phoenician Queen of Heavens (Helck 1971: 232–234; Boedeker 1974: 4; Burkert 1985: 155).[19] Ancient writers were aware of the Levantine origin of the cult.[20] Herodotus (1. 105),[21] reporting a legend about the sanctuary of Aphrodite *Ourania* in Ascalon, mentions its antiquity:

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[16] A few archaeological finds of representations of doves in Miletos and Istria (Bilabel 1920: 97; Ehrhardt 1983: 164, Anm. 766) certainly do not suggest that an established cult existed there. However, see Bilabel 1920: 97; Ehrhardt 1983: 165 for an opposite opinion.

[17] The a priori suggestion of Kharko (1946: 138), that the cult of Aphrodite was brought to Phanagoria from Teos, since Teos was the metropolis of Phanagoria, is groundless.

[18] For the Oriental origin of the cult of Aphrodite in general, see Herter 1960; Fauth 1964; Burkert 1985: 152–156; 1992: 96–100; cf. *GGR* 1: 519–520. Pirenne-Delforge (1994: passim) is reluctant to accept this approach *in toto*, although she acknowledges a most considerable impact of the Levantine goddesses on the Greek Aphrodite.

Boedeker (1974) maintains that the Greek Aphrodite was essentially an Indo-European dawn-goddess, who had absorbed some features of Asiatic goddesses. Yet even she has to acknowledge that the Greeks themselves regarded Aphrodite *Ourania* as the Greek counterpart of Astarte or Ishtar (Boedeker 1974: 4). For the interaction of Indo-European and Semitic elements in the cult of Aphrodite see: Friedrich 1978: 22–23, 49–54.

[19] For the cult of Astarte see the recent fundamental study by Bonnet (1996).

The confrontation of the evidence on the Greek Aphrodite and the Phoenician Astarte is the subject of an illuminating article by C. Bonnet and V. Pirenne-Delforge, entitled "Deux déesses en interaction: Astarté et Aphrodite dans le monde Égéen" (to appear in *La collection de l'Institut historique belge de Rome: Colloque Franz Cumont*). The authors examine the emergence of Aphrodite's image and demonstrate the crucial role of Astarte in this process. I am indebted to Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge for having communicated this manuscript to me.

> ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο τὸ ἱρόν, ὡς ἐγὼ πυνθανόμενος εὑρίσκω, πάντων ἀρχαιότατον ἱρῶν, ὅσα ταύτης τῆς θεοῦ· καὶ γὰρ τὸ ἐν Κύπρῳ ἱρὸν ἐνθεῦθεν ἐγένετο, ὡς αὐτοὶ Κύπριοι λέγουσι, καὶ τὸ ἐν Κυθήροισι Φοίνικες εἰσὶ οἱ ἱδρυσάμενοι ἐκ ταύτης τῆς Συρίης ἐόντες.
>
> This sanctuary, as I learn by inquiry, is the oldest of all the temples of the goddess, for the sanctuary in Cyprus was founded from it, as the Cyprians themselves say, and the [sanctuary] on Cythera was founded by Phoenicians from the same area in Syria. (Translation by A. S. Godley, slightly modified)

Pausanias maintaines (1.14.7) that the Assyrians had been the first people to worship Aphrodite *Ourania*, and were followed by the Paphians on Cyprus,[22] and by the Phoenicians, living in Ascalon in Palestine, who taught her worship to the people of Cythera:

> πρώτοις δὲ ἀνθρώπων Ἀσσυρίοις κατέστη σέβεσθαι τὴν Οὐρανίαν, μετὰ δὲ Ἀσσυρίους Κυπρίων Παφίοις καὶ Φοινίκων τοῖς Ἀσκάλωνα ἔχουσιν ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ, παρὰ δὲ Φοινίκων Κυθήριοι μαθόντες σέβουσιν.
>
> The first men to establish the cult of *Ourania* were the Assyrians, after the Assyrians the Paphians of Cyprus and the Phoenicians who live at Ascalon in Palestine; the Phoenicians taught her worship to the people of Cythera. (Translation by W. H. S. Jones, slightly modified)

Pausanias (3.23.1) also described the sanctuary of *Ourania* on Cythera as the most sacred (ἁγιώτατον) and the most ancient (ἀρχαιότατον) of all Greek sanctuaries of Aphrodite. The temenos at Paphos was already famous by Homer's time (*Od.* 8.267; *H. Aphr.* 59).[23] Hesiod (*Theog.* 191–198) makes Aphrodite, who had just arisen from the foam, swim first to Cythera in a seashell, and only thereafter come ashore in Cyprus.

Aphrodite could have been named *Ourania*, because she was born of the semen of the castrated Ouranos, as Hesiod relates (*Theog.*

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[20] For the legend recorded by Dionysios of Halicarnassos (1.50.1–2), according to which the cult of Aphrodite on Cythera was instituted by Aeneus on his way from Troy, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 219.

[21] For a commentary on this passage see Helck 1971: 232.

[22] Cyprian Aphrodite was also called *Ourania* in the Attic inscriptions (*IG* II^2 337, 4636). Pausanias also compares *Ourania* with the Syrian Goddess (ἡ θεὸς ἡ Συρία, 7.26.7; cf. below, 1.2.1.3; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 249).

[23] For the Paphos sanctuary of Aphrodite see: Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 322–347; Bonnet 1996: 75–81.

176 ff., cf. *GGR* 1 521–522).[24] Yet in the Homeric epic, as well as in the Homeric hymns, she is the daughter of Zeus (e.g., *Il.* 3.374, 5.312, 14.193; *Od.* 8.308; *H. Aphr.* 81, 107, 195) and Dione (*Il.* 5.370), therefore clearly "a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Heaven" (Burkert 1992: 98). This divine couple was firmly established in the Mesopotamian mythology, and Homer proves to be dependent on the Mesopotamian tradition in this and other instances (Burkert 1992: 98).[25] "Celestial" being a common epithet of the Semitic Ishtar-Astarte,[26] the divinity who had the most profound impact on the shaping of the image of Aphrodite, Hesiod's version might be aimed at explaining the existing *epiklesis*, and not vice versa. However, Hesiod's account, in its turn, also reveals essential borrowings from Near Eastern mythology (Schwabl 1960; West 1966: 211–213; Graf 1993: 86–96; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 312–315). Moreover, the story was certainly not an extravagant legend or adaptation of an Oriental myth for the Greek audience: the motif of castration and male impotence was deeply rooted in the ritual both of Aphrodite and Astarte (Burkert 1985: 155; see below, 1.2.1.3). Thus, the title *Ourania*, even when interpreted as indicating Aphrodite's genealogy (Schwabl 1960: 56; Herter 1960: 69), and not only her role as the Celestial Queen, presumably originates from the Near East.

Androgynic features in the cult of Aphrodite, suggested by the double herm, are attested in a number of literary sources (Farnell 1896–1909, 2: 755; Delcourt 1958; Herter 1960: 71–75; Burkert 1985: 152).[27] According to Macrobius (*Sat.* 3.3.2; cf. Settis 1966: 160), Aphrodite was worshipped as Aphroditos, a bearded woman, at Amathus in Cyprus. Transvestite rites of Aphroditos in Athens are mentioned by Philochoros (*FGH* 328 F 184). Aphrodite was even portrayed bearded, in Athens and elsewhere (below, 1.2.3.2). It was told that Theseus, when sacrificing a she-goat to Aphrodite, discovered that a female animal had turned into a male (Plut. *Thes.* 18).[28] Herodotus believed that the Scythian effeminate priests, οἱ ἐνάρεες οἱ ἀνδρόγυνοι (4.67), bore the curse of Aphrodite *Ourania*, who had punished the Scythian plunderers of her most ancient sanctuary in the Palestinian Ascalon with a "female disease" (Her. 1.105; below, 1.2.1.3). Pausanias maintained that the cult of Aphrodite *Ourania* was established in Attica by Aegaeus who thought that his childlessness was a result of the goddess' anger (Paus. 1.14.7).

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[24] For Asrarte as a daughter of Ouranos see Bonnet 1996: 22–23.

[25] Friedrich (1978: 5) asks, however, whether Dione was not of Proto-Indo-European origin.

[26] For the parentage of Astarte and her connections with Inanna and Ishtar see Bonnet 1996: 135–147.

[27] Androgyny, probably expressing the all-inclusiveness of the great goddess, was common to several divinities (Herter 1960: 75), usually having conventional gender, male (Zeus *Labraundeus*, Baal) or female (Cybele, Ishtar, Astarte, Aphrodite).

A number of sources unanimously identify the Mother of Gods with Agdistis (Paus. 1.4.5; Strabo 12.5.3; Hesych. s.v. Ἄγδιστις; cf. Mitchell 1995, 2: 19), a primordial earth-born bisexual creature, who was deprived of his/her male organs by the gods (Paus. 7.17.11). The androgyny of the primeval being, represented in the temple of Zeus Belos in Babylon, is described in detail by Berossus (Cook 1914–40, 2: 675). It seems to be conveyed also by the Levantine coins featuring double male-female heads (Cook 1914–40, 2: 674, figs. 607–613).

It is suggested that the herms of Aphrodite developed in Greece from the aniconic *asheroth* of Syro-Phoenician Astarte (Delivorrias 1984: 10; cf. Contenau 1949: 102). In fact, on Cyprus, in the ancient temple of Aphrodite at Paphos, where the cult revealed most conspicuous Oriental traits, the goddess was worshipped in the form of a stone cone (Tacit. *Hist.* 2.3). According to Pausanias, in Athens a herm of Aphrodite *Ourania* was erected near her temple in a locality named Cepi (1.19.2; cf. Plin. *Hist. Nat.* 36.16; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 48, 63–66). A second-century BC diminished copy of this herm was discovered near the agora sancuary of Aphrodite *Ourania* (Delivorrias 1984: 20; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 68).[29] Thus, important features of Aphrodite *Ourania*—her Oriental origin and her androgyny—were emphasized on the Bosporus by means of representing the goddess in the form of a double herm.

The existence and prosperity of a temple of Aphrodite in the Bosporan town named *Gardens*—Cepi—beginning from the sixth century BC, may be considered an additional indicator of the overall oriental background of the cult of Aphrodite on the Bosporus (Shaub

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The Carian Zeus Labraundos was apparently bisexual. His iconography strikingly resembled that of Artemis *Ephesia* (Laumonier 1958: 77–81, pl. 3).

For the double gender of Inanna-Ishtar see Flemberg 1991: 13–14; Bonnet 1996: 138. Groneberg (1986) is however inclined to interpret the bipolarity of the goddess as functional, and not reflecting her sex in biological terms. For the transsexuality of the Scythian Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* see below.

For a very stimulating discussion of androgyny in Indo-European and non-Indo-European cultures see O'Flaherty 1980: 283–334.

[28] For a different interpretation, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 38.

[29] Settis (1966: 16) even hypothesizes that Pheidias portrayed his famous Aphrodite *Ourania* leaning on her herm; cf. Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 67.

1987a: 91),[30] although it should be noted that the goddess is not attested to have been called *Ourania* in Cepi.

In the fourth century BC the connection of Aphrodite with the sea, another Oriental feature in the cult of the goddess (*GGR* 1 521; Burkert 1985: 153; Flemberg 1994: 14–15), is testified only by some pieces of imported painted pottery (Shaub 1987a: 98–99).[31] It becomes evident in the next century, when graffiti containing the name of Aphrodite were inscribed on a wall painting, depicting a fleet of more than thirty ships. This fresco, datable to the mid-third century BC, was discovered in a sanctuary in Nymphaem (N. L. Grach 1984).

The earliest inscription attesting to Aphrodite's connection with the sea is a late first century BC dedication, inscribed on a marble statue base (*CIRB* 30). The monument was set up in the reign of Asandros (47–17 BC) by a *nauarchos* Pantaleon, for Poseidon Σωσίνεως and Aphrodite Ναυαρχίς. The joint cult of Poseidon and Aphrodite was also known elsewhere. In Cilicia, Poseidon ’Ασφάλιος and Aphrodite Εὔπλοια appeared together (*CIG* III 4443; cf. *CIRB* 30: comm.). On Delos, Astarte *Palaistine* Aphrodite *Ourania* was worshipped together with Poseidon in the sanctuary of the Phoenician gods (*IDelos* 1719, 1720; Servais-Soyez 1986: 351).

Aphrodite, the protectress of merchants and sailors, was venerated as *Euploia, Pontia,* and *Epilimenia* throughout the Mediterranean (Farnell 1896–1909, 2: 750; Sokolowski 1964: 5; Graf 1985: 261; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 433–434). Aphrodite *Euploia* is certainly very close to her Oriental counterparts (Miranda 1989); a dedication from Delos Ἴσιδι Σωτείραι ’Αστάρτει ’Αφροδίτηι Εὐπλοίαι (*IDelos* 5.2132) reveals this connection most strikingly (Baslez 1986: 291, 297; Bonnet 1996: 87).[32] From Ephesos, where Artemis *Daitis*, a patroness of water, lakes, and sea, was worshipped, comes a dedication to Aphrodite

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[30] For the cult of Aphrodite in the Gardens see Langlotz 1954; Burkert 1985: 153. Pirenne-Delforge (1994: 63–66) prefers to interpret Aphrodite's epithet ἐν κήποις in Athens as topographic, rather than cultic. However, on Cyprus near Paphos Aphrodite was worshipped in a place named Ἱεροκηπία (Strabo 14.6.3; cf. Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 342), and Aphrodite *Paphia* was certainly very close to the Levantine goddesses. For the symbolism of the sacred garden in Oriental culture and its relation to Ishtar and other great goddesses see Andrae 1947–52; Detienne 1972.

[31] Especially worth noting are the elegant late fifth–early fourth century Attic lekythoi representing Aphrodite in a shell (*AGSP*, color ill. between pages 80 and 81); for the shells in the cult of Aphrodite see Delivorrias 1984: 4; Shaub 1987a: 98.

[32] On Cos, the Phoenician Baalat was worshipped in the temple of Aphrodite *Pontia* (Baslez 1986: 291, 301). For Astarte as a protectress of sailors see Helck 1971: 232.

Daitis, who was also without doubt a marine deity (Picard 1922: 316; Przyluski 1950: 43). The same *Daitis* could be associated either with Aphrodite or with the Ephesian *Potnia theron*, which demonstrates once again Aphrodite's affiliation with the vast realm of responsibilities of Anatolian and Levantine goddesses.

1.1.1.4 *Strabo's Etymological Legend and the Relation between Aphrodite Apatouros and the Indigenous Goddess*

The word *Apatouros* was incomprehensible to Greeks, who therefore invented a false etymology resting on a phonetically similar Greek word and a local legend. Strabo (11.2.10) relates this legend (which he himself qualifies as *mythos*), which explains the obscure epithet of Aphrodite Ἀπάτουρος as a derivative from ἀπάτη—treachery:

> Ἐτυμολογοῦσι δὲ τὸ ἐπίθετον τῆς θεοῦ μῦθόν τινα προστησάμενοι, ὡς, ἐπιθεμένων ἐνταῦθα τῇ θεῷ τῶν Γιγάντων, ἐπικαλεσαμένη τὸν Ἡρακλέα, κρύψειεν ἐν κευθμῶνί τινι, εἶτα τῶν Γιγάντων ἕκαστον δεχομένη καθ' ἕνα τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ παραδιδοίη δολοφονεῖν ἐξ ἀπάτης.
>
> Those who seek the real meaning of the epithet of the goddess, adduce a certain myth, according to which when she was attacked there by the Giants, she called upon Heracles and concealed him in a hiding place; and then, introducing the Giants one by one, gave them over to Heracles to be murdered through treachery. (Translation by H. L. Jones, modified)

Since Rostovtzev (Rostovtzeff 1919b: 473), almost all the writers on the religion of the Black Sea region have considered this story one of the Greek versions of the Scythian genealogical myth and have used it as one of the important arguments in favor of the close connections between Aphrodite *Apatouros* and the local Scytho-Maeotian goddess (El'nitzkiy 1960: 49; Artamonov 1961: 65; Tolstoy 1966: 236; Rayevskiy 1977: 56; Shaub 1987a: 93; 165). In fact, Herodotus (4.8–10) relates a myth about Heracles and the monstrous sovereign of Scythia, half-woman and half-snake, who lived in a cave, stole the cattle of Geryoneus from the hero, and afterwards bore him three sons. One of these sons was destined to become the ancestor of the Scythian royal dynasty. Another version of the same tale is registered in *Tabula Albana* (IG XIV 1293 A 93 ff.): here Heracles appears as the forefather of the Scythians, while their female progenitor is Echidna, whose father Heracles had to fight before he could mate with the reptile-shaped daughter (below, 1.2.2). Those who drew the two legends together based their opinion on the fact that in both tales Heracles and the local female deity were the protagonists; Heracles had to fight monsters; Aphrodite as well as the anguipede goddess dwelt in a cave.

Tokhtas'yev (1983) questions this consensus. He argues that the similarity between the two legends is superficial, and the mere fact of the encounter of the local female deity with Heracles is not sufficient to prove the structural affinity between the two stories: Heracles was popular enough in the Black Sea colonies to appear in a number of distinct legends; fighting monsters was his usual occupation, hence there is nothing particular in the fact that this element appears in a number of stories; κευθμών does not mean necessarily "a cave," but also "a hole," "a shelter," or some place beneath the earth, and since Strabo said ἐν κευθμῶνί τινι, this shelter could not serve Aphrodite as a home, but was only a hiding place suitable for her plot (Tokhtas'yev 1983: 111–114). Tokhtas'yev further argues (1983: 115), that the word κευθμών is characteristic of a poetic style and hardly ever appears in prose, which indicates that Strabo's source must have been rendered in verse. Finally, δέχομαι hints at a situation from the life of *hetairai*, meaning in this and similar contexts "to receive in a sexual sense" (πορνεύειν; Tokhtas'yev 1983: 114). Thus, according to Tokhtas'yev, the entire story turns into a comic scene from some local mime, making fun of Aphrodite's most vulgar aspect of *Porne*, receiving the giants one after another, with Heracles, who was very popular in mimes, in his traditional role of the fighter of monsters (Tokhtas'yev 1983: 116–117).

Tokhtas'yev's argument, in spite of its ingenuity, raises some serious doubts. First of all, the comparison between the detailed account of the legend by Herodotus, whose aim was to relate different versions of the Scythian genealogical myths, and the brief remark of Strabo, does not warrant far-reaching conclusions about structural differences between the original legends. Strabo relates just a fragment of the tale; there must have been additional details which Strabo (or his source) did not think suitable to report: his objective was only to indicate the possible explanation of the unclear word. Moreover, Tokhtas'yev (1983: 112, 117) himself admits that the local folklore influenced the creative imagination of his hypothetical mimographer.

Thus, it is unreasonable to claim that the two legends differ substantially, since one of them is known only partially. Strabo's story gives the impression of incompleteness: the logical prize that the hero would have been awarded for his aid might have been Aphrodite's love (Rostovtzeff 1919b: 473; Tolstoy 1966: 234; Shaub 1987a: 93, 165); such an end immediately brings together this story and other Black Sea legends about Heracles. In any event, the surviving part of Strabo's legend, in which the mistress of the country uses a shelter hidden in the earth and Heracles assists her in gaining victory over the giants, does not exclude the possible affinity between this story and the Scythian genealogical myth. Indeed, the native population of the Taman peninsula was not purely Scythian but Sindo-Maeotian, but the Sindians were apparently of Scythian stock (above, 0.3) and Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian notions of the anguipede goddess, indigenous Aphrodite *Ourania*, and their *paredroi* were very similar (below, 1.2.3). Thus, Aphrodite *Apatouros* of the Bosporan legend and the anguipede goddess of the Scythian genealogical legends look akin, though one cannot establish their absolute identity.

Finally, κευθμών τις, which Aphrodite used in her plot, even if it was not her own dwelling, indicates the goddess' connection with underground hiding places, such as caves, clefts, etc., and thus the chthonic aspect in her image, which is suggested by other pieces of evidence from the Bosporus.

1.1.1.5 *The Etymology of the Word Apatouros*

The explanation of the word Ἀπάτουρος, proposed by Strabo on behalf of the Bosporan Greeks, turns out to be curious but misleading. No less deceptive is the conviction of some modern scholars that the cult of Aphrodite Ἀπάτουρος emerged on the Bosporus under the influence of the festival of Ἀπατούρια, imported from the Ionian *metropoleis* of the Bosporan Greeks (Farnell 1896–1909, 2: 657; Kharko 1946: 138; Gaydukevich 1949: 212; Gajdukevič 1971: 226; Sokol'skiy 1976: 79; Yaylenko 1977: 221). The Ionian *Apatouria* were under the protection of Zeus, Athena and Apollo (Nilsson 1906: 463; Deubner 1932: 232–234; Parke 1977: 88–92); in Miletus *Apatouria* were performed in Zeus' honor (Ehrhardt 1983: 165). Indeed, it was the festival of Athena *Apatouria* that was celebrated by the virgins of Troezen (*Paus.* 2.33.1), and not of Aphrodite *Apatouria*, as Frisk and Chantraine state unanimously, but nevertheless erroneously (Frisk 1959: 118; Chantraine 1968: 96). Joining the non-existent Aphrodite *Apatouria* of Troezen to the Bosporan Aphrodite *Apatouros*, both scholars maintain that Ἀπάτουρος as an *epiklesis* of Aphrodite is a derivation from Ἀπατούρια, composed of α-(ὁμο-) and πατήρ (Frisk 1959: 118; Chantraine 1968: 96). This claim remains ungrounded, because Aphrodite *Apatouros* has nothing to do with the *Apatouria.* Moreover, her full title during eight hundred years remained Ἀφροδείτη Οὐρανίη Ἀπατούρου μεδεούση, Celestial Aphrodite the Mistress of Apaturum, meaning that the goddess adopted the name of the place, and it is the toponymic which requires an explanation (Shaub 1987a: 167). In fact, even the ancient Greeks did not suggest that *Apatouros* was linked with *Apatouria,* although this association would have been more apparent than the complicated story about ἀπάτη.[33]

The etymology of the word Ἀπάτουρος is not Greek, and is to be sought in the local languages. This word is a composite of two stems, both of which appear in the glossary of Scythian word stems by Abayev (1949: 151–195), *ap-* meaning "water" (Abayev 1949: 153),[34] and *tura-* "quick" or "mighty" (Abayev 1949: 185). The former stem is evident in several personal names (Abayev 1949: 153); in the form *apra-* (deep water) it is present in the hydronymic Δάναπρις—Dnieper (deep river; Abayev 1949: 154). The stem *tura-* is apparent in another river name, Τύρας—Dniester (Abayev 1949: 185). Thus, taking into consideration the characteristic inversion of Scythian *composita* (Abayev 1949: 234), *Apaturum* may be rendered as "mighty water" or "quick water." Both stems were used in the formation of hydronymics, and it looks natural that together they designated a harbor and hence a local cultic place, where the indigenous Great Goddess had probably been venerated before the Greeks arrived. On the other hand, one can easily expect a goddess, such as Aphrodite or Astarte, who is known to be connected with the aquatic element, to adopt the aspect of the mistress of "mighty waters."[35]

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[33] Curiously enough, an ἀπάτη-myth was told also about the institution of the Athenian *Apatouria,* see Töpffer 1934: 2673.

[34] Cf. also *Api,* the name of a Scythian goddess equated by Herodotus with Gaia (Her. 4.59), which may be connected with the same stem (Abayev 1962: 449; Artamonov 1961: 83), although one cannot rule out other options (Zgusta 1933).

[35] Rayevskiy (1977b: 57) suggests that *Apatouros* was the name of the local goddess, and that the place name was therefore derived from the personal name, and not the other way around. Tokhtas'yev does not believe that a tiny harbor, which had nothing particular about it, bestowed its name upon the sanctuary. In his opinion, Hecataeus mentioned κόλπος Ἀπάτουρος because of the sanctuary, which conferred its name on the harbor (Tokhtas'yev 1986: 142). However, the goddess is constantly officially titled Ἀφροδείτη Οὐρανίη Ἀπατούρου μεδεούση, Ἀπατούρου

However, by the beginning of Greek colonization, the Taman peninsula and the surrounding area was under the control of Sindo-Maeotian tribes. Thus, the word *Apatourus* seems to preserve the sound of the Sindo-Maeotian name of the place, Sindians being of Scythian stock. In any case, the existence of the local cult of the great goddess, granting both power and fertility, is well established (below, Chapter 2).

To sum up, the word *Apatourus* is of local origin, and in the place named Apaturum the local goddess had been worshipped before the Greek colonization. The goddess was famous enough for the first colonists to learn about her immediately on their arrival to the Bosporus. They associated her with their Aphrodite *Ourania* and established her first Greek shrine, presumably at the ancient place of worship.

1.1.1.6 *The Archaeology and Iconography of the Cult of Aphrodite*

In the course of the following centuries other sanctuaries of Aphrodite *Ourania* were founded. Regrettably, the Phanagorian sanctuary which was called "remarkable" by Strabo (11.2.10) and which must have been the second in importance after the Apaturum itself, has not been identified archaeologically. It is reasonable to presume that by the beginning of the fourth century BC the Phananagorean sanctuary had already been erected, and to conjecture that two pedestals with dedications to Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou Medeousa* (*CIRB* 971, 972) originate from there.

The sanctuary at Cepi was probably founded in the sixth century BC: a priest named Molpagoras, who inscribed his dedication on a late sixth-century BC kylix (Sokol'skiy 1973: 88), most likely served in the sanctuary of Aphrodite in the town (Ehrhardt 1983: 166). Archaeologically, a second-century BC temple *in antis* was identified as belonging to Aphrodite (Sokol'skiy 1964). Along with a small contemporary statue of Aphrodite, executed by a very good artist (Sokol'skiy 1964: 112–115, figs. 10, 11), two earlier dedications with the remains of her name (a fifth-century BC fragment of a marble

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being a substantive in the genitive, qualifying the proper name 'Αφροδείτη. It is obvious therefore that the goddess was named after the place of her worship. If the suggested etymology of the toponym is correct, it best matches a harbor. It therefore seems plausible that the shrine received its name from the harbor.

plate and a fourth-century BC pedestal), a collection of graffiti, terracotta figurines, etc., was unearthed (*AGSP*: 84, pl. XLIV: 4, 11, 14–16). The building was destroyed in the first century BC (*AGSP* 84).

An attempt has been made to interpret a third-century BC temple at Hermonassa as belonging to Aphrodite *Ourania* (Kharko 1941; 1946). Since a frieze fragment found at the temple featured giants, Kharko conjectured that the frieze illustrated the legend about Aphrodite, Heracles and giants, as narrated by Strabo (11.2.10). In fact, only the figures of the giants, shaped from the hips downwards like twin serpents, are really visible on the photograph of the stone (Kharko 1941). According to Kharko (1941: 86), Heracles is represented with "a foot fragment," and "a contour of a human figure" designates Aphrodite. The state of preservation of the monument does not allow a reliable identification of its subject as a unique representation of the local myth. The frieze may have featured a standard gigantomachy, and it could belong to the temple of any deity. Therefore, the Hermonassa temple cannot confidently be ascribed to Aphrodite.[36]

Although no architectural remains of the early temples of Aphrodite have yet been discovered in the Bosporus,[37] archaeological evidence in general is rather abundant. Quantitatively, the most important category of evidence is terracottas, either produced on the Bosporus or imported, which may be divided into groups according to the motifs they represent: Aphrodite with a dove (*TSP* 3: pl. 28: 8; *TSP* 4: pls. 38: 7, 8; 41: 1); doves (*TSP* 3: pls. 7: 4; 57: 5, 67: 4; Kobylina 1961: pl. 23) that belong to Aphrodite[38] par excellence (Burkert 1985: 153; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 415–417; cf. Robert 1971); Aphrodite with Eros (*TSP* 3: pl. 7: 3; *TSP* 4: pl. 19: 4); and protomes of Aphrodite (*TSP* 3: pl. 16: 2; *TSP* 4: pl. 38: 2, 3, 5). Protomes depicting a goddess with a calathus or a polos on her head, in many cases touching her breasts with both hands, together with figurines of a goddess sitting on a throne, constitute the largest group of Bosporan terracottas, beginning from the fifth century BC (plate 2; *TSP*

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[36] However, Gaydukevich (1971: 224) accepted Kharko's hypothesis.

[37] Khudyak's (1962: 23–29) interpretation of a sixth–fourth century BC building in Nymphaeum as a shrine of Aphrodite, based only on an inaccurate comparison between this building and the sanctuaries of Aphrodite in Naucratis, Eleusis, and Paphos (Khudyak 1962: 27) and not supported by any additional evidence, cannot be accepted.

[38] And Astarte (Helck 1971: 274).

1–2, 3: passim). At least a considerable part of these figurines was probably considered as representing Aphrodite.[39] Terracottas of Aphrodite *Anadyomene* become common in the second century BC (*TSP* 3: pl. 23: 1, 3). The goddess was not infrequently portrayed inside a shell (*AGSP*: color plate 2, between pp. 80–81; Minns 1913: fig. 251). Some figurines show nude Aphrodite standing or sitting beside a herm (plate 1; *TSP* 3: pls. 23: 2, 6; 25: 4, 5; 26). Terracottas of Eros are also numerous (*TSP* 3: pls. 30–33). Depictions of Aphrodite herself and Eros are especially dominant among the locally made figurines (*TSP* 3: pls. 61–62).

The cult of Aphrodite in the guise of *Porne* is suggested by the terracotta reliefs of Aphrodite with Eros tying up her sandal, all of them produced in Phanagoria (Marchenko 1977: 124–125, cf. Delivorrias 1994: No. 591); the same subject is depicted on a gold finger-ring from the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumuli (Stefani 1865: pl. 3).[40] Aphrodite is portrayed as *Epitragia*[41] on a terracotta plaque from the Taman peninsula (Valdgauer 1922: 225; *TSP* 3: pl. 5: 5; Delivorrias 1984: No. 966). Aphrodite *Ourania* in her solar aspect is represented on a second-century BC terracotta: the semi-nude goddess wearing a polos stands near a column crowned with the sun disk (plate 3; *TSP* 3: pl. 22: 1; Kobylina 1978: fig. on p. 102).[42]

Both iconographically and historically, one of the most important monuments of the cult of Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* is a second-century BC stele with a dedication of a thiasos to the goddess, decorated with her image (plate 4; *CIRB* 75). The stele was found in Kerch; it is thus the earliest document with the full title of the goddess from the European Bosporus.

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[39] For the perplexity of identifications of terracottas, especially when attributes are lacking, see Alroth 1989: 65, 80–83, 112.

[40] For the iconographic type see Fauth 1964: 428; cf. the interpretation of the Pan, Eros, and Aphrodite group, otherwise known as Slipper Slapper, created about 100 BC for a Syrian merchant on Delos: Aphrodite's display of her sandal as an allusion to the fact that prostitutes had the word "follow" picked out on the soles of their sandals (Biers 1987: 302, ill. 10.34). Aphrodite with a sandal is portrayed on a number of statues and terracottas (Delivorrias 1984: Nos. 514–515, 1252–1254). For other interpretations of the motif and the possible connection between the Greek βλαύτη, βλάττα and the Semitic בעלת, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 60–62; Bonnet 1996: 89.

[41] For the symbolism of representations of Aphrodite riding a goat see Knigge 1982; Delivorrias 1984: 98–99; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 34–40.

[42] A considerable quantity of imported jewelry with representations of Aphrodite and Eros, which was discovered mainly in Bosporan tumuli (Shaub 1987a: 100), may be related to the beliefs of the local aristocracy buried there, rather than to those of the Bosporan Greeks.

The rectangular upper part of the stele is decorated with a relief gable with three palmetto acroteria. Its tympanum features Aphrodite riding a swan and holding a scepter in her left hand, with Eros to her right. There are two Nikae above the cornice, the right one pouring a libation, while the left one holds a thymiaterion.

From a symbolic point of view, portraying Aphrodite riding a swan or a goose probably emphasizes her astral nature as the goddess of the morning star, Venus (Knigge 1982: 164),[43] and as a goddess of the new-born spring (Delivorrias 1984: 96). Historically, as Valdgauer (1922) has brilliantly demonstrated, the Kerch type of Aphrodite on a swan probably belongs to an artistic tradition dating back to some popular Attic masterpiece of the fifth century BC. Valdgauer's argument is based on an analysis of a number of art objects executed in various media, all of them clearly dependent on the same original. He also examined the stylistic characteristics of the Kerch stele and showed their relation to the stylistic peculiarities of the Pheidias school. He believes that this particular iconographic type of Aphrodite *Ourania* clearly differs from the late archaic and early classical types and appeared only in the second half of the fifth century BC.

It is quite likely that the sculptor of the Kerch stele adopted the artistic and iconographic style of *Ourania* from some imported pieces, such as ivory plaques, bronze mirrors, etc. (Valdgauer 1922: 209–212; 217–219). However, it seems more convincing that he copied a local replica of the original Athenian statue (cf. Kharko 1946: 139).

A Bosporan addition to the classical model was perhaps the representation of two Nikae above the gable,[44] who were intended to convey the significance of Aphrodite *Ourania* as the bestower of military success. In this quality Aphrodite was worshipped elsewhere in the Greek world (Sokolowski 1964: 6; Croissant and Salviat 1966: 465–741; *GGR* 1 521; Flemberg 1991;[45] Graf 1985: 262–264; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 33, 208–209, 404, 450–454; MacLachlan 1995: 209). The most ancient wooden xoanon of Aphrodite *Ourania* on Cythera depicted her armed (Paus. 3.23.1); other statues of armed Aphrodite were also famous in antiquity (e.g. Paus. 2.5.1; 3.15.10; cf. Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 103, 199, 211). Some representations of armed Aphrodite have been preserved (Flemberg 1994: passim). The goddess' bellicosity is usually explained as one of the manifestations of her Oriental parentage (Burkert 1983: 80; Flemberg 1994: 15–22).[46]

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[43] For Aphrodite as a star-goddess see Knigge 1982; 1985.

[44] In any case, they are not depicted on other replicas of the Athenian original.

[45] With a collection of 31 literary and epigraphic Graeco-Roman *Testinomia* (pp. 29–36).

The inscription on the stele commemorates the dedication of a thiasos:

> . . . ὑπὲρ ἄρχοντος καὶ βασιλέως Παιρ[ι]σάδου . . . καὶ βασιλίσσης Καμασαρύης . . . [καὶ] ’Αργότου . . . βασ[ιλίσ]σης Καμασαρ[ύη]ς ἀνδρὸς [ὁ συνα]γωγός . . . καὶ οἱ θιασῖτα[ι] ἀνέθηκ[αν τὴν στή]λη[ν] ’Αφροδ[ε]ίτῃ Οὐ[ρανίᾳ ’Απατού]ρου μεδεούσηι . . .
>
> For the sake of the archon and king Pairisades . . . and the queen Camasarye . . . and Argotas, the husband of the queen Camasarye, the *synagogos* . . . and the thiasotes offered the stele to Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* . . .

The following list of the thiasotes is broken, with only five damaged names extant on the stone, which is otherwise fairly well preserved.

The inscription is dated after 150 BC by the fact that Pairisades III, the husband of Camasarye,[47] who ruled ca. 180–150 BC, was already dead, and the dedication was performed for the sake of his son, Pairisades IV (ca. 150–125 BC), his mother Camasarye, and her consort (*CIRB* 75: comm.)

CIRB 75 is the first document left by a thiasos on the Bosporus. The striking peculiarity of the Bosporan thiasoi—their connection with the state cults and royal power (below, 1.3.1.1 and Part II)—is already evident in this inscription. In fact, in the second century BC the cult of Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* had already gained an outstanding position in the state. The first dedication to Aphrodite by a member of the royal family, performed in the fourth century BC (*CIRB* 1041), marked the beginning of the future devotion of the Bosporan kings to Aphrodite, as it was expressed in a number of inscriptions, as well as in the coinage of the Roman period.

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[46] For an interpretation of the titles ὡπλισμένη and *Nikephoros* as metaphoric, implying rather the goddess' ability to bestow arms of beauty and success in marriage, than military victories, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 450–454.

[47] This royal couple is mentioned in an honorary decree from Delphi (*Syll*^{3} 463) and in the list of dedicants to Apollo Didymaios in 178/77 BC (Rehm 1958: 273; *CIRB* 75: comm.). For the dates of these documents see Y. G. Vinogradov 1987: 64.

Alongside the iconographic theme of Aphrodite on the swan, another type, which persisted into the first centuries AD, appeared on a fragment of a Bosporan stele (plate 5.1), dated to the second–first centuries BC (Sokol'skiy 1978: 132). It was discovered in the vicinity of the Batareyka II site, one of the rural settlements of the Asiatic Bosporus. Regretfully, the shaft of the stele is lost, and only the central part of its gable is preserved, featuring a bust of the goddess, flanked by two Erotes. Aphrodite wears a veil which covers her headdress and shoulders, and a chiton with a high girdle. The gable is crowned with a palmetto acroterium. There is no inscription on the extant fragment, hence the monument is dated by its publisher by style only. If it had not been for the Erotes, the bust of the woman could have been taken for a portrait of the deceased, and the stele itself for a gravestone, since both stylistically and technically it resembles very much some reliefs on epitaphs (Sokol'skiy 1978: 128), especially from the Taman (Sokol'skiy 1967: 193, figs. 3, 6, 7, 10).

The composition of Aphrodite flanked by two Erotes has no parallels in Hellenistic Bosporan sculpture, but appears repeatedly on metal pendants from the northern Black Sea littoral (Sokol'skiy 1978: 131). A third–second century BC bronze die for the production of such pendants was discovered in Tyritaca (Gaydukevich 1940). First–second century AD locally produced pendants with Aphrodite and two Erotes are found all over the northern Black Sea littoral, notably in the area of the Bosporus (Galanina 1973: No. 10). Sokol'skiy (1978: 131) suggests that the type evolved from some famous classical original, notwithstanding the scarcity of imported objects, featuring this scene: the one example he cites is a fourth-century BC finger-ring from Chersonesus (Gaydukevich 1940: 300), which could have been purposefully made for the Black Sea market, like dozens of other pieces of jewelry. However, a fourth-century BC terracotta disc featuring Aphrodite with two Erotes was discovered in Heracleia, in Sicily (Pugliese Carratelli 1996: cat. No. 278); a gold medallion showing the goddess with two Erotes behind her shoulders originates from Rhodes (Delivorrias 1984: No. 1137). Thus, a Mediterranean provenance for this design cannot be ruled out, although it is likely that the locally produced pendants with Aphrodite and two Erotes were modeled on some Black Sea monument, most probably Bosporan, since it was on the Bosporus that the cult of Aphrodite occupied such a prominent position. In any case, the image of Aphrodite from Batareyka II was clearly created in accord with the Bosporan artistic conventions of the period: the rounded shape of the goddess' face and the treatment of her garments accurately reflect the local type, common in the reliefs on the gravestones (Ivanova 1961: 24–28). Thus, this iconographic type of Aphrodite corresponds much better both to the intrinsic local traits in the cult of the goddess and to the aesthetic taste of the Bosporan population. It is only natural that this type continued during the later centuries, while the classical Aphrodite on the swan is represented by one isolated example.

There are some convincing arguments in favor of the assertion that by the fourth century BC there were several cultic statues of Aphrodite on the Bosporus. They rest on the discovery in Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian aristocratic burials of objects of art, executed by different artisans, showing representations of the goddess, which are very similar stylistically and were presumably modeled on the same Greek examples. Thus, Ivanova (1954: 224; 1961: 59–60) reasonably argues that the image of the sitting goddess on the numerous gold pendants from the fourth-century BC tumuli of the Kuban area (plate 8.2; below, 1.2.3.5) can be traced back to a Bosporan monumental prototype. Three gold temple pendants (so-called "earrings") from three tumuli of the same century, hundreds of kilometers apart, show the same hieratically stiff seated female figure with enormously large leaf-like palms raised to her head (plate 8.3; below, 1.2.3.3), and this figure recurs on the Bosporan monuments in the Roman period (plate 15.2, below, 1.3.2.4). Seated figures are extremely unusual in jewelry, but the attitude is normal in monumental sculpture—the Bosporus was a major center of northern Black Sea decorative metalwork, producing luxury goods for the barbaric market (Gaydukevich and Kaposhina 1951: 172). It is thus very likely that the more skillfully executed version of the "earrings" had in fact been modeled on a Bosporan statue and was consequently reproduced on ruder replicas (Bessonova 1982: 32–33). On a fourth-century BC gravestone from the Trekhbratniy tumulus not far from Kerch, the goddess is shown sitting in a carriage, its coach shaped as a *naiskos* (plate 10.2), which may also hint at a cultic statue worshipped in a famous Bosporan temple as a source of inspiration for the artist who created the stele (Bessonova and Kirilin 1977: 136).

Probably connected with Aphrodite were two extraordinary monuments discovered in Myrmecaeum. Two large ash altars, dated to the fifth–early fourth century BC and the early fourth–mid-third century BC (Gaydukevich 1965: 34), contained numerous terracottas of goddesses (goddess?), graffiti with names and abbreviations of names of worshippers, clay figurines of dogs and remains of their sacrifices, offerings of implements and traces of cult feasts and nocturnal ceremonies (Gajdukevič 1971: 182; Denisova 1981: 105–107). The only graffito with the name of the deity, which was found in the more ancient complex, is a dedication to Aphrodite: I]EPH ΑΦΡΟΔΙΤΗ[Ι (Gaydukevich 1965: 34). The common tendency to associate all the female terracottas lacking attributes with Demeter made Gaydukevich identify the deity worshipped there as Demeter (Gajdukevič 1971: 182; cf. *AGSP* 222). He was however aware of the possibility that Demeter was not the only deity who received sacrifices on the ash altars (Gaydukevich 1965: 30), and that Aphrodite also had her part in the cult (Gaydukevich 1965: 34). Denisova (1981: 111) identified the deity with the local fertility goddess. Although no specifically local features can be distinguished in the evidence from the complexes, and Denisova herself cited similar phenomena from all over the Greek world,[48] the particular popularity of ash altars on the Bosporus[49] seems to have been due to non-Greek influence. However, Sindians and Maeotians associated their Great Goddess with Aphrodite (below, Chapter 2); hence Aphrodite seems to play the leading role in the cult performed on these altars. Since several figurines of dogs were discovered inside the Myrmecaeum ash altars, Hekate, the nocturnal leader of dogs (Burkert 1985: 171), may have had a share in the cult. Aphrodite and Hekate were probably joined by some other deities, but the existence of several cults in one sanctuary or their combination in a mixed cult was quite normal on the Bosporus.

1.1.1.7 *The Queen Comosarye Monument*

Queen Comosarye, the Taman-born wife of Pairisades I (344/3–311/10 BC) dedicated a pair of statues "to the mighty gods Sanerges and Astara" (ἰσχυρῶι θειῶι Σανέργει καὶ ᾿Αστάραι; *CIRB* 1015). The statue of the goddess and the pedestal with the inscription were found on the bank of the Akhtanizov salt lake, to the south of Cepi. Unfortunately, only the body of a standing woman wearing a Greek chiton survived (Ivanova 1961: figs. 19–20, 65–69). It is generally agreed that Astara is actually Astarte; furthermore, Astara was identified with Aphrodite *Ourania* (Rostovtzev 1913: 16–17; Rozanova 1949a; El'nitzkiy 1950: 192; Gaydukevich 1949: 202, 514; Gajdukevič 1971: 214; Sokol'skiy 1964: 116). In fact, Greek Aphrodite *Ourania* was closely associated with Astarte. Moreover, the Scythian goddess Argimpasa, identified by Herodotus (4.59) with Aphrodite *Ourania*, also originated in the Orient, and preserved numerous traits of Astarte; the Great Goddess of the Sindo-Maeotians did not differ greatly from Argimpasa (below, 1.2.1.3). It is quite probable that alongside other Near Eastern borrowings, the Sindo-Maeotian goddess acquired even her name from Astarte; therefore Astara could be the local name of the goddess known to the Greeks as Aphrodite *Ourania.*

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[48] The ash altar of Zeus in Olympia, of Hera in Pergamon (Paus. 5.13.8–11), of Zeus in Arcadia (Paus. 8.38.7), and others. Some of these altars have been excavated (Gaydukevich 1965: 35–36).

[49] They were also discovered not only at the Bosporan sites of Iluratum and Cytaeum (Gaydukevich 1965: 37; *AGSP* 71), but also at the Scythian site of Neapolis (Shul'tz 1969: 120).

Sanerges was compared to Heracles (Rozanova 1949a; Gaydukevich 1949: 202, 514; Gajdukevič 1971: 214; El'nitzkiy 1950: 192; 1970: 70), primarily because Heracles was the partner of Aphrodite *Apatouros* in the local legend about the goddess, related by Strabo (11.2.10). Rostovtzev (1913: 16) suggests that Sanerges be affiliated with Sandas, the Hittite god of power, war (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 294; Augé 1994), and fertility (Cook 1914–40, 1: 595). In Tarsus this god was also associated with Zeus, and called either Baal-Tars or Zeus *Tersios* (Cook 1914–40, 1: 596–597). Sandas (or Sandon) was also identified with Heracles in Tarsus (Cook 1914–40, 1: 600–603; Chuvin 1981: 319–326; Jones 1984: 179–180)[50] and in Asia Minor (Nonnos *Dionys.* 34.191–192; Berossus *apud* Agathias *De reb. just.* 2.24, *FHG* II. 498; cf. Zgusta 1964: No. 1370; Chuvin 1981: 321; Huxley 1982). Attributes of Sandas, bunches of grapes and a pyramid topped by an eagle, reflect the ambiguity of his nature.

Heracles was the consort of the anguipede goddess in the Scythian genealogical legend, this goddess in many respects doubling Aphrodite-Argimpasa (below, 1.2.2). Notably, in the versions of this legend Heracles is sometimes replaced by Zeus. The offspring of this union were the first Scythian kings; therefore, kings of the Bosporan Thraco-Sarmatian dynasty claimed Heracles as their ancestor (*CIRB*

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[50] On the Hellenistic coins of Tarsus portraying Sandas see Cook 1914–40, 1: 600–602, figs. 465–468; Zahle 1990: 126, 132, fig. 14.

5, 1048).[51] The Scytho-Maeotian counterpart of Aphrodite *Ourania* was often represented with a male paredrus, who might be referred to as Heracles in Greek, but was actually a local god. Queen Comosarye, knowing the native tradition better than anyone else, may have called the pair Aphrodite *Ourania*/Heracles by their authentic local names (Rostovtzev 1918: 125; 1919: 464; Kochelenko and Blawatky 1966: 5).[52] However, this suggestion thus far remains only hypothetical.

1.1.1.8 *Some Preliminary Conclusions*

At the very beginning of the history of the Greek colonies on the Bosporus Aphrodite *Apatouros* was already one of the most venerated deities. In the cult of the goddess conspicuous Oriental traits engaged with the local elements to produce a powerful divine personality, who attracted the devotion of royal as well as rank-and-file worshippers. To judge by the surviving inscriptions from the fifth–first centuries BC, twelve dedications from both sides of the Bosporus were addressed to Aphrodite (*CIRB* 7, 13, 17, 30, 31, 75, 971, 972, 1041, 1043, 1111, 1234), many more than any other deity; even Apollo, the main god of the Ionian settlers, was honored only in eight inscriptions (*CIRB* 6, 10, 25, 974, 1037, 1038, 1039, 1044). Aphrodite had at least four sanctuaries: in Apaturum, Phanagoria, Panticapaeum, and Cepi. Two of them, Apaturum itself and the Phanagorian ἱερὸν ἐπίσημον, were famous beyond the borders of the Bosporan Kingdom. Of other Greek gods, only Apollo had temples in three cities, Panticapaeum (Blavatskiy 1957: 33; Kobylina 1965: 179; Pichikyan 1984: 146), Hermonassa, and Phanagoria (Marti 1934: 57). The remaining gods either had one temple in Panticapaeum, or had no temples at all. Thus, the goddess, whose indigenous background showed through the conventional Greek attire, occupied the leading place in the pantheon of the Bosporus even before the cultural changes of the first centuries AD.

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[51] However, they have never asserted descent from Aphrodite herself.

[52] Shaub (1987a: 94) even suggests that Astara and Sanerges may be the deities represented on the double herm *CIRB* 1111.

1.1.2 *Demeter and Kore*

1.1.2.1 *The Epigraphy and Archaeology of the Cult in the Greek Cities*

The Bosporus, one of the granaries of Greece, was certainly dependent on the fertility of its fields; it is only natural that Demeter was highly esteemed there. All three dedications in her honor, *CIRB* 8, 14[53] (fourth century BC) and *CIRB* 18 (third century BC) originate from Panticapaeum, *CIRB* 14 inscribed on a marble pedestal of a statue, set up by a priestess of the goddess.[54] The existence of a priestess indicates that there was a sanctuary of Demeter in the city, which is not preserved. This sanctuary may be referred to in a graffito on a fragment of a fifth-century BC plate: ἱερὸν Δή[μητρος (Tolstoy 1953: No. 167).

Another cultic complex, where the cult of Demeter played a leading role, was discovered in Nymphaeum. It was founded in a natural cleft on a bank of a rocky harbor in the sixth century BC, rebuilt in the early fifth century BC, and existed till the late third century BC (Khudyak 1962: 36–60). A plain black plate with a graffito ἱερὸς Δήμητρος (Tolstoy 1953: No. 123) and a number of fourth-century BC terracotta figurines of a goddess with a wreath of grain ears, all of them produced from the same mold (Khudyak 1962: 55), were unearthed in the sanctuary. These, as well as other pieces of evidence, also discovered there, such as the figurines of *hydrophorae* and miniature *hydriae* (Khudyak 1962: 50; Shaub 1987a: 39), make it clear that at least in the fourth century BC the cult of Demeter was the major cult at the temenos. Graffiti mentioning other gods, such as Heracles (Tolstoy 1953: No. 111) and Dionysos (Tolstoy 1953: No. 118), together with two molds for the terracotta figurines of the obese Silenus (Khudyak 1962: pl. 33: 2) and a *Kourotrophos Daimon* (Khudyak 1962: pl. 5: 2),[55] and other finds do not contradict this interpretation. Nevertheless, the definition of the complex as a sanctuary that belonged only to Demeter from the very beginning is certainly too far-fetched (Denisova 1981: 113; Shaub 1987a: 34–38). The Dionysiac element was also important, as the terracottas of dancing maenads and standing women holding tympans (Skudnova 1970: 84) testify.

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[53] The provenance of this stone is controversial. However, Latyshev (*IOSPE* II 20) and the editors of *CIRB* associate the inscription with Kerch.

[54] In *CIRB* 8 the word ἱερωμένη is restored.

[55] Khudyak (1962: 40) thought that this character was female; Shaub interprets him as the male *Daimon Kourotrophos*, who usually appears in the inventory of the shrines of female goddesses (1987a: 35; cf. Alroth 1989: 66, 111).

A round altar base, dated to the second half of the fifth century BC (Kobylina 1972: 7) and found at the foot of the Panticapaeum acropolis, may have originated in the city sanctuary of Demeter (Shaub 1987a: 119). The base is decorated with a bas-relief of a solemn train of women, clad in himatia, walking one after another. It may represent a women's procession in honor of Demeter *Thesmophoros: CIRB* 18 is indeed a dedication Δή]μητρι Θεσμοφόρωι. Another relief, from the late fifth century BC, perhaps produced in Athens, portrays Demeter, Kore, and a procession of torch-bearers approaching them (Saverkina 1986: 154). This relief undoubtedly reveals associations with the Eleusinian mysteries. This is true also of the famous Attic *pelike* from the Pavlovskiy tumulus near Panticapaeum, decorated with elaborate scenes of mysteries (Stefani 1859: 32; Clinton 1992: 81–82, figs. 20–21). The abduction of Kore and other related subjects were depicted on the murals of the late Hellenistic Alkimos' vault (*ADZh* 165–166). Thus, the Eleusinian connections of the cult of Demeter in Panticapaeum are indisputable.

As to the terracottas, only a few are indisputably connected with the cult of Demeter and Kore: two Attic figurines depicting Demeter holding Kore on her shoulder, from Panticapaum and Phanagoria (Kobylina 1974b: fig. 19: 5); and figurines of pigs, animals that were sacrificed to Demeter par excellence (Kobylina 1961: 35–36). As to the rather numerous figurines of a seated woman without attributes, their sweeping association with Demeter (Kobylina 1961: 29; Kruglikova 1970: 6–7) remains questionable (Shaub 1987a: 121–123). It is based on the a priori assumption that the cult of Demeter predominated on the Bosporus, which is clearly erroneous, especially in so far as the Asiatic side is concerned, where no goddess really competed with Aphrodite. Terracotta figurines of a seated goddess and protomes of a goddess wearing a calathus or a polos with a veil covering her headdress and shoulders, as well as depictions of a goddess touching her breasts, are known in considerable numbers all over the Greek world. Very often similar figurines come from the sites associated with different deities (Silant'yeva 1974: 7).[56] These terracottas are to be identified according to the predominant cult at the site of their discovery. In the case of the Bosporus, they may rather represent Aphrodite, who was in that area much more popular than Demeter.

1.1.2.2 *The Bol'shaya Bliznitza Tumulus*

The main argument supporting the concept of the merging of Demeter with the indigenous fertility goddess is that the burials of the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus in the vicinity of Phanagoria attest to the adoption of some major elements of the Eleusinian cult by the local aristocracy. The tumulus was excavated in the 1860's, and the results were expounded in the detailed survey by Rostovtzev (*ADZh* 10–29) and discussed in a large number of works (Minns 1913: 422–429; Peredol'skaya 1962; Artamonov 1966: 68–72; Alexandrescu 1966; Gajdukevič 1971: 296–300; Grach N. L. 1974; Pruglo 1974; Shaub 1987b). This necropolis of an aristocratic Sindian family contains three stone vaults, two burials in stone chests, and a cremation burial, all dated to the second half of the fourth century BC (Pruglo 1974). The middle vault, which had been pillaged before its discovery, was decorated with a painting of a goddess wearing a flower wreath on her head. Another vault contained the burial of a woman in a cyprus sarcophagus; the deceased wore a dress ornamented with gold pendants and gold jewelry such as a calathus with pendants, necklaces, bracelets, and finger-rings (Minns 1913: figs. 312–318). Remains of an armed warrior with a gold wreath on his head, his garments also trimmed with gold pendants, were found in the third vault. One of the stone chests contained the burial of a woman, wearing a diadem with pendants and accompanied by a number of vessels and twenty-six terracotta figurines. There was an additional rich female burial in another chest. Traces of four funeral feasts, laid out on special mud brick platforms, included animal bones, fragments of pottery, and in two cases low altars-*escharai*.

Immediately after the opening of the central vault Stefani (1865: 15) suggested that the deceased belonged to a Greek priestly family, active in the cult of the Eleusinian Demeter; this opinion was adopted by a number of scholars (Peredol'skaya 1962; Artamonov 1966: 68; Ryabova 1979: 47). However, the horse harness found in the central vault, numerous pendants decorating the garments of the deceased, the character of the ritual feasts held at the site, and many other features testify beyond any doubt to the local origin of the family (Gajdukevič 1971: 297). Rostovtzev was certainly right in assuming the Sindian affiliation of the nobles buried in the Bol'shaya Bliznitza (1925: 371). He also supposed that their ladies served not Demeter, but the local Great Goddess, who could be identified both with Demeter and Aphrodite. Rozanova (1951), Gaydukevich (Gajdukevič 1971: 228, 297), and Rayevskiy (1985: 170) supposed that this goddess was Aphrodite *Apatouros*.[57] Alexandrescu (1966: 82) and Bessonova (1983: 76) emphasized the Dionysiac aspect in the inventory of the burials. In his systematic study of the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus as an archaeological complex, Shaub (1987b) made a convincing case arguing that the goddess worshipped by the priestesses buried there was the indigenous Great Goddess, close to Demeter merely in some aspects (cf. *ADZh*: 10–29; Artamonov 1961: 67).

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[56] However, the interpretation of the figurines of the sitting goddess from the Nymphaeum sanctuary as representing Demeter (Skudnova 1970) seems reliable. For an opposing opinion see Shaub 1987a: 122.

In fact, even the identification of the goddess, whose *anodos* was depicted on a slab of the ceiling of the main vault, is problematic. The slab features a huge head and the shoulders of a goddess, who raises both hands to her face. In her right hand she holds yellow lilies; a wreath of lilies, poppies, and dodders embellishes her hair (Ernshtedt 1955: 254). In the opinion of Ernshtedt (1955: 254) the goddess was most probably not Demeter, but rather Kore, whose image was closely associated with flowers. Kobylina (*AGSP*: pl. 108: 4) identified the goddess as Kore. However, a flower wreath also fits Aphrodite εὐστέφανος (Hesiod. *Theog.* 196; cf. Farnell 1896–1909, 2: 750–751; Boedeker 1974: 27). The gesture of the goddess, holding plants in her raised hands, resembles the attitude of the indigenous goddess, raising to her face hands with leaf-shaped palms (below, 1.2.3.3). Thus, the painting in the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus presumably portrayed the local Great Goddess. This interpretation is supported by other items from the burial.

Only a few pendants representing Demeter and Kore from the second vault are without doubt connected with Eleusinian theology.

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[57] Rozanova (1951) and Gaydukevich (Gajdukevič 1971: 228) infer that in the area of the Tzukuruk salt lake the cult of Aphrodite was so prominent that the famous Apaturum must have been situated there.

Heracles could also be associated with Aphrodite. In any case, they are only a part of the two thousand pendants discovered there, depicting Athena, Helios, dancing girls, Medusa heads, griffins, sphinxes, deer, etc. (Gajdukevič 1971: 297), which reflect beliefs different from the Eleusinian.

Demeter and Persephone were regarded as the champions of the dead in Hades (Burkert 1985: 198); the local Great Goddess performed this role, as well (below, 1.2.3.5). In the fourth century BC the idea of divine patronage over the dead, expressed in accordance with Greek artistic conventions, could have been recognized by the hellenized Sindians as a general assertion of their own conception of afterlife (Rostovtzeff 1922: 179); there can be no doubt that this belief was extremely important in the ideology of the Sindians, whose preoccupation with the nether world is manifest in the luxury of their burials. Thus, the image of the goddess, Kore or rather the Sindian Aphrodite, could have been perceived as that of a guarantor of eternal life or a symbol of the apotheosis of the deceased.

As to the terracotta figurines from the tumulus, Peredol'skaya (1962) considers all of them as depictions of the protagonists of the Homeric hymn to Demeter. This suggestion is rejected by Alexandrescu (1966: 75), Denisova (1981: 10), and Shaub (1987b).[58] Alexandrescu indeed demonstrates that only two figurines may be unequivocally associated with the cult of Demeter: that of a pig and a protome of Kore; Shaub (1987a: 56) doubts even that, assuming that the latter figurine might represent Aphrodite as well.

The inventory of the female burials includes finger-rings with representations of Aphrodite and Eros,[59] a calathus with a relief scene of Amazons battling griffins (Minns 1913: fig. 315), and phalerae depicting Greeks fighting Amazons[60] (Machinskiy 1978: 137–138). The latter two scenes have nothing to do with the cult of Demeter, but characterize the deity worshipped by the buried priestess as militant and having an androgynous aspect (Rostovtzeff 1919b: 469; Shaub 1987a: 160–162). This appears to be emphasized also by the bracelets of the priestess, which are decorated with figurines of half-male, half-female lions (Minns 1913: fig. 317): they possess both manes and conspicuous nipples (Machinskiy 1978: 137). Although these features are reminiscent of Aphrodite, in the present case from a barbaric tomb, they could be related to the remarkable androgyny of the indigenous cruel and bellicose goddess, Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*[61] (below, 1.2.1.3).

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[58] Clinton (1992: 36) agrees that these terracottas suggest a Demeter cult, but in his opinion they express fertility ideas and parody, and show nothing that pertains to the Eleusinian Mysteries or the Hymn to Demeter.

[59] On one of them—Eros tying Aphrodite's sandal (Stefani 1865: pl. 3; Gajdukevič 1971: 297).

[60] In the fourth century BC Amazons fighting Greeks or griffins become a favorite subject in the painting of Attic *pelikae*, manufactured for the Bosporan market. From the third century BC the same scenes were reproduced on the local pottery. All the vessels were discovered exclusively in tombs; therefore the connection between *Amazonomachia* and the funeral ritual is beyond doubt (Machinskiy 1978: 137).

A gold laurel wreath was found in the cremation burial, and gold olive wreaths in two vaults. These objects are alien to the cult of Demeter (Shaub 1987a: 59). Gold pendants depicting a winged goddess with tendril-shaped legs and wearing a calathus were discovered in two vaults and one stone chest burial (plate 6: 5; Petrov and Makarevich 1963: fig. 1; Prushevskaya 1955: 344); the same design in the form of an ivory carving (Petrov and Makarevich 1963: fig. 1: 5; Ivanova 1955a: 428) decorated the sarcophagus. This is the anguipede goddess, closely associated with the local Aphrodite *Ourania* (below, 1.2.3.1). Numerous pendants depicting dancing satyrs and maenads (Minns 1913: fig. 318), and characters, probably including the goddess herself, riding lions and griffins (Stefani 1869: pl. 1), imply that the cult was associated with orgiastic ceremonies. They perhaps hint at the aspect of *Potnia theron* in the image of the goddess. The subjects of the paintings on the pottery used in the funeral feasts are manifestly foreign to the Eleusinian realm (Shaub 1987b).

In summary, the burials of the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus reveal a syncretistic religious phenomenon which is basically indigenous in its major components, i.e., the funerary ritual and the cult with which the deceased noble women were attached. In this cult the features of the local goddess are interwoven with allusions mainly to Aphrodite, but also to Demeter.[62] But even if there was some minor influence of the Eleusinian ideas on the beliefs of the hellenized Sindian nobility, the evidence from the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus does not warrant the assumption of the effect of the local beliefs on the worship of Demeter by the Greeks.

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[61] Machinskiy (1978) also maintains that a gold pectoral from the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus represents *Enareis*, but his argument, ingenious as it is, remains insufficient as the basis of this suggestion (cf. Rayevskiy 1985: 185–203).

[62] A remote parallel to this complex phenomenon might be sought in the cult of Demeter *Melaina* (the Black) in Arcadia (Paus. 8.42): the ancient *xoanon* showed

The cult of Eleusinian Demeter was one of the most ancient in Miletus (*Her.* 9.97); Demeter *Thesmophoros* was also worshipped there (*Steph. Byz.* s.v. Μίλητος). The Panticapaean cult of Demeter, with its emphasis on the Eleusinian elements, was nevertheless most probably adopted from the metropolis (Shaub 1987a: 124). Although not all the rites that the Nymphaeum sanctuary housed were concerned with Demeter, its overall Greek character is rather clear. Thus, the thesis that the cult of Demeter was one of the leading in the area because it absorbed some traits of the indigenous female deity (Kobylina 1961: 29) is erroneous. Demeter never reached a dominant position on the Bosporus, and the postulated influence of the local beliefs and practices on the cult of Demeter in the Greek cities has not been supported by unequivocal evidence.

1.1.3 *Artemis*

The oldest dedication from the Bosporus, dated to the late sixth century BC, is addressed to Artemis of Ephesos. It reads Σῶν ’Αρτέμι ’Εφεσ[ηίη].[63] The dedication, inscribed on a bronze fragment, probably of a tripod, was discovered in Panticapaeum (Blavatskiy 1951: 224). Two lapidary dedications to Artemis of Ephesos also come from there (*CIRB* 6a and 11, both fourth-century BC), and one from Gorgippia (*CIRB* 1114, the fourth century BC). A fourth-century BC dedication of a statue by a priestess to Artemis, whose epithet is not preserved on the stone,[64] found in Hermonassa (*CIRB* 1040), attests to the existence of a sanctuary of the goddess in the city. There may have been a temple of Artemis of Ephesos on the acropolis of Panticapaeum (Rozanova 1960: 132), since all three dedications ’Αρτέμιδι ’Εφεσείηι and a number of dedications to Artemis which do not

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the goddess sitting on a rock, dragons and other animals surrounding her horse-head; she held a dolphin in one hand and a pigeon in the other (Paus. 8.42.4; cf. Jost 1985: 89–90, 312–317; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 262). This chthonic theriomorphic *Potnia hippon* with the attributes of Atargatis-Aphrodite resembles the Scytho-Sindian anguipede goddess, closely affiliated with Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* (below, 1.2.1.3).

[63] Blavatskiy rendered it as Σῶν ’Αρτέμι[δι] ἔθεσε and dated it to the fifth century BC (1951: 224). Rozanova (1960) suggested the reading Σῶν ’Αρτέμι ’Εφέσ[ηι] and placed the inscription in the sixth century BC. Y. G. Vinogradov amended the reading, bringing it in accord with the archaic grammar (1974: 59–62).

[64] The editors of *CIRB* restored it as ’Εφεσείηι; Lur’ye (1948: 211) suggested ’Αγροτέρᾳ.

contain her *epiklesis*, (*CIRB* 12, the fourth century BC; *CIRB* 28, the first century BC), and a graffito,[65] were discovered there. An acropolis sanctuary is affiliated with the cult of Artemis by its excavator (Tolstikov 1987), but this identification is far from being certain.[66]

A necklace with pendants shaped as miniature copies of the statue of Artemis *Ephesia* was found in Theodosia (S. Reinach 1892: 53).

The cult of Artemis of Ephesos, both in origin and in ritual very close to Cybele or the great Mother Goddess (Picard 1922: 451–538; Hanfmann and Waldbaum 1969; Burkert 1983: 80), must have arrived at the Bosporus from Ionia, maybe directly from Ephesos, for it is not attested in Miletos (Ehrhardt 1983: 148).

The construction of a temple for Artemis *Agrotera* by a certain Xenocleides in the mid-fourth century BC is recorded in an inscription found near the Akhtanizov salt lake,[67] in the vicinity of Phanagoria: . . . ἀνέθηκε τὸν ναὸν ’Αρτέμιδι ’Αγροτέραι . . . (*CIRB* 1014). This temple, dedicated to the "goddess of the outdoor world" (Burkert 1983: 65–66; 1985: 150), was probably situated somewhere near the place where the stone was found, in the countryside beyond the city of Phanagoria. The unusual nature of the Taman peninsula near Phanagoria, with its ravines, crevices, hills, and low cones of active volcanoes,[68] must have impressed the ancient colonists even more than it impresses us to-day. The Akhtanizov salt lake is dominated by the hill of Sts. Boris and Gleb, which is in fact a low volcano crater, gas permanently burning in the fissures at its foot. This environment is certainly most fitting for the goddess of the wilds.

The cult of Artemis *Agrotera* is not attested in the Ionian metropoleis of the Bosporan Greeks (Wentzel 1894), but it is well-known in

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[65] Five fourth-centuries BC graffiti: Αρ, Αρ[, Αρ/τε,]ρτεμ[, Αρτεμι (Tolstoy 1953: Nos. 163, 173, 175, 176, 184) were found there; only one is without doubt a dedication—’Αρτέμι (No. 184); all the rest may be abbreviations of some common theophoric names, such as Artemidoros, etc.

[66] A cult table from this sanctuary is dedicated by a daughter of the Scythian king Scilouros to a goddess bearing the obscure name of Διθαγοια (Y. G. Vinogradov 1987: 60).

[67] The reports on the circumstances of its discovery are contradictory. According to Köppen and Dubois de Montpéreux, the stone was flung out during a volcanic eruption (*CIRB* 1014, comm.). Gerz (1898: 156) maintained that the inscription was discovered after an earthquake, together with some remains of an ancient sanctuary.

[68] The main features of the landscape have not changed during the last three thousand years; Marchenko (1960: 103–104) cites both the evidence of the ancient authors mentioning the volcanic activities in the region and the results of modern geological research.

Attica; therefore it may have been introduced to Phanagoria from Athens (Shaub 1987a: 106). Both Athenians and Spartans sacrificed to Artemis *Agrotera* immediately before battle (Burkert 1983: 65–66). In Attica Artemis *Agrotera* was worshipped in Agrai, where a temple of Meter stood until modern times. This proximity was hardly coincidental, since the two goddesses are affiliated, in Anatolia and elsewhere (Burkert 1983: 265–266).

Terracottas of Artemis found on the Bosporus reveal additional traits of a fertility deity and *Potnia theron* in the image of the goddess. Alongside the standard iconographic type of Artemis with a hind and a bow (Silant'yeva 1972: 33), there are other types: the goddess with a hind and a pomegranate (*TSP* 3: pl. 5: 4; Sinant'yeva 1974: 18), a chthonic symbol of fertility[69] (Apollodor. 1.5.3; Ovid. *Met.* 5.537; cf. Cook 1914–40, 2: 813–818; Burkert 1983: 285); and the goddess wearing a Phrygian cap, holding or riding a hind (Marchenko 1962: 128; Marti 1941: 27). The Phrygian cap is unusual for the Greek Artemis, but is worn by the Thracian Bendis, who is normally identified with Artemis (Fol and Marazov 1977: 22–23; Garland 1992: 111–113, pls. 25, 26). Therefore the iconographic type of Artemis wearing Phrygian cap is classified as Artemis-Bendis (Kahil 1984: 690–692). It is believed that the goddess depicted on some Thracian votive tablets from the Roman period riding a doe, bow in hand, was Bendis (Fol and Marazov 1977: 22).[70] Thus, the terracottas of a goddess wearing a Phrygian cap probably represent Bendis, personification of the Great Mother of Gods most popular among the Thracians (Gočeva 1986: 85).

Artemis-Bendis riding a doe and holding a torch[71] in her hand is also represented on earrings from Theodosia and Nymphaeum (Stefani 1868: pl. 1: 2, 3; Minns 1913: 397, fig. 318: 7; cf. Fol 1984: No. 3).

Ancient writers saw much in common between Bendis and the Phrygian Cybele, and the cult of Bendis was widespread in Bithynia

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[69] It was probably this chthonic attribute that enabled the placing of the terracotta into a grave (Shaub 1987a: 107). Elsewhere in the Greek world, depictions of Artemis holding pomegranates are extremely rare (Kahil 1984: Nos. 542–544).

[70] See, however, Fol 1984: 771 for a different opinion.

[71] To Socrates, the night race of the torchbearers was the most impressive event in the celebration of the *Bendideia* in Athens (Plato *Rep.* 328A). However, torches were also a characteristic attribute of Greek Artemis (Kahil 1984: 619).

(Fol and Marazov 1977: 22; Gočeva 1986: 85).[72] In Athens Bendis has enjoyed an official cult since 429/8 BC (W. S. Ferguson 1949). Judging by the terracottas, it is impossible to determine whether she came to the Bosporus directly from Thrace, from Asia Minor, or from Athens. The popularity of the image of the goddess riding a doe, which was most common in Thrace although also known in Greece (Kahil 1984: 673), may hint at Thrace as a plausible source.

As Ephesia, Agrotera, or Bendis, Artemis always appears on the Bosporus in the guise of the Great Goddess, the wild *Potnia theron*, a fertility goddess whose power extends as far as the nether world.

1.1.4 *Cybele*

A stele with a dedication of a priestess Μητρὶ Φρυγίαι, erected during the reign of Pairisades II (284/3–ca. 245 BC) indicates that in the third century BC Cybele had a temple at Panticapaeum.[73] Its remains were discovered on the peak of the Mithridates hill, the acropolis of Panticapaeum (Gajdukevič 1971: 175), together with a badly damaged Roman copy of a Greek fifth-century BC statue of the goddess, in all probability imported to the Bosporus (Waldhauer 1936: 20; Ivanova 1954: 246; Kobylina 1978: fig. on p. 62). Below the temple was a cave, used for ritual purposes (Gajdukevič 1971: 175).

The earliest evidence for the cult is a fifth-century BC graffito [ἀ]νέθηκεν τῆ Μητρὶ δ[ῶρον] (Gaydukevich and Mikhalovski 1961: 135).[74] A fifth-century BC mold for the manufacture of terracottas of Cybele from Nymphaeum (Khudyak 1962: pl. 14: 4) and her fourth-century BC figurine made in Phanagoria (Kobylina 1974b: 26) attest to the local production of the terracottas of the goddess.

Gaydukevich (Gajdukevič 1971: 175) cited Hesychius (s.v. Κιμμερὶς θεά· ἡ μήτηρ τῶν θεῶν) as an argument in favor of his hypothesis (which is not supported by archaeological data) that the Panticapaeum temple of Cybele was founded on an ancient, pre-Greek cultic place, where the local goddess had been worshipped. Shaub (1987a: 119) suggests that "the special popularity" of Cybele in Panticapaeum, for which Shkorpil (1914) also argues, may be based in the local cult, prior to the Milesian colonization. However, the evidence for the cult of Cybele in the Bosporan Kingdom demonstrates just the opposite, that Cybele was not revered too ardently, and that her cult shows no traces of influence by local beliefs. Cybele, just as Artemis, retained her image as it was accepted in the Greek world.

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[72] For the ethnic proximity of Thracians and Phrygians see Vassileva 1990; Taylor 1994: 385–386.

[73] In *CIRB* 23, a dedication inscribed on a marble statue base and dated to the same period, the word τ[ῆι Μ]η[τ]ρί is restored.

[74] Fourth-century BC graffiti Μητ, Μητρο (Tolstoy 1953: Nos. 216, 226, 235) may be abbreviations of theophoric names (Shaub 1987a: 117).

1.1.5 *Hekate*

Hekate, also affiliated with the great Anatolian goddess (*GGR* 1 722; Laumonier 1958: 406–425), was worshipped in Panticapaeum in a small temple on the northern slope of the acropolis (Blavatskiy 1951: 22).[75] Two three-faced *hekataia* have been discovered in the city (Akimova 1983: 85). The only dedication to Hekate is an altar (*CIRB* 22, third century BC), set up by Βάθυλλος Δέρκιος Εκα[τῆ]ι Σπάρτης μεδεούσ[ηι]. This Bathyllos must have been a Spartan (Gaydukevich 1960: 105). As there are no traces of the cult of Hekate in Sparta, Hekate of this inscription is considered to be a double of Artemis, who enjoyed there a special veneration (Stefani 1869: 83; *CIRB* 22, comm.; Akimova 1983: 83). Hekate indeed was frequently equated with Artemis (Burkert 1985: 171). The popularity of the goddess in Miletus (*GGR* 1 722; Bilabel 1920: 96) may account for the extent to which theophoric names such as Hecataeus, etc., were spread in the area of the Bosporus.

1.1.6 *Athena*

The cult of Athena hardly existed in the Greek cites of the Bosporus (Shelov 1956: 72). The meager number of terracotta figurines (Kobylina 1970: 14) and coins depicting Athena (Shelov 1956: 72) reflects perhaps the importance of Athens in Bosporan politics rather than a religious devotion of the Bosporan Greeks to her cult (Shelov 1956: 72; Shaub 1987a: 127). The abundance of decorative metalwork with representations of Athena, some of them very unusual, and even Panathenaic amphorae, found exclusively in the burials of local nobility (Bezsonova 1975), finds a likely explanation in the identification of the Greek goddess with a local female deity by the indigenous population. This connection could be based on Athena's warlike character and close mythological alliance with Heracles (Shaub 1987a: 123). However, pendants representing a helmeted female head, strung together with a lion's head; Stefani 1876: pl. 3) or a lion's head and a fish (plate 6: 3; Silant'yeva 1959: 105) impart the affiliation of this goddess with the bellicose Scythian Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* (below, 1.2.1.3). Thus, it may be suggested that Athena's image on the artifacts from the Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian tombs was associated by those who put these objects into the graves, not with the Greek Athena, whom they did not know, but with the local goddess, Argimpasa-Aphrodite (Bessonova 1983: 39).[76]

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[75] Blavatskiy (1951: 22) dates it "not earlier than the Spartocid period", i.e. after 438 BC.

1.1.7 *Conclusions*

In the sixth–first centuries BC the pantheon of the Bosporus was clearly dominated by female deities, headed by Aphrodite *Apatouros*. All the goddesses of the Bosporus resembled the Great Goddess in her multiple manifestations, bestowing fertility on humans, domestic animals or cultivated fields, or protecting nature, endowing the sovereigns of this world with power and extending her rule to the nether world. In the iconography, in the ritual implied in inscriptions, and in the divine epithets of all the Bosporan goddesses, except for Demeter, Anatolian and Levantine features come to the foreground. At this stage, only the cult of Aphrodite revealed some perceptible local connections, probably accounting for its extraordinary popularity. However, the tendency towards effacement of the distinction between the images of the goddesses manifested itself in a number of cultic complexes, where effigies of different deities were mixed up and the evidence concerning the ritual was ambiguous to such an extent as to prevent an unequivocal identification of the monument.[77] The common or related origins, together with the functional and ritual proximity between such goddesses as Artemis, Cybele and Hekate, on the one hand, and Aphrodite,[78] on the other hand, led to the merging of individual traits of these deities.[79] The leading role of Aphrodite from the beginning of Bosporan history enabled her to adopt some features of other goddesses, drive them to the background, and emerge as an almost universal divinity.

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[76] The Thracian king Cotys I actually believed that Greek Athena had consented to substitute for the Thracian Great Goddess as his spouse, and waited for her in a bridal chamber (Athen. 531 F–532 A; Fol and Marazov 1977: 52); hence, at least for the Thracians, a correspondence between the virgin patroness of Athens and the Mother Goddess did not look impossible.

For the assimilation of the war-like Allat *Ourania* and Astarte in Palmyre, and the iconography of Allat *Ourania* borrowed from the Greek Athena see Bonnet 1996: 55.

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[77] Leaving aside the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus as an essentially indigenous monument, one may list the favissae on Mayskaya (Blevaka) hill with hundreds of terracottas of different goddesses, dated to the sixth–second centuries BC (Marchenko 1962; 1977), the Myrmecaeum ash altars, and the Nymphaeum sanctuaries.

[78] Cf. Hesych., s.v. Κυβήβη· ἡ μήτηρ τῶν θεῶν καὶ ἡ Ἀφροδίτη, ἄλλος δὲ Ἄρτεμιν.

[79] Especially in the beliefs of the rural population (Kruglikova 1970: 7).

CHAPTER TWO

THE LOCAL GODDESSES

1.2.1 *Herodotus on the Goddesses of the Scythian Pantheon*

Herodotus (4.59) listed the Scythian gods and identified them with the Greek ones:

> Θεοὺς μὲν μούνους τούσδε ἱλάσκονται, Ἱστίην μὲν μάλιστα, ἐπὶ δὲ Δία τε καὶ Γῆν, νομίζοντες τὴν Γῆν τοῦ Διὸς εἶναι γυναῖκα, μετὰ δὲ τούτους Ἀπόλλωνά τε καὶ οὐρανίην Ἀφροδίτην καὶ Ἡρακλέα[1] καὶ Ἄρεα. τούτους μὲν πάντες Σκύθαι νενομίκασι, οἱ δὲ καλεόμενοι βασιλήιοι Σκύθαι καὶ τῷ Ποσειδέωνι θύουσι. ὀνομάζεται δὲ Σκυθιστὶ Ἱστίη μὲν Ταβιτί, Ζεὺς δὲ ὀρθότατα κατὰ γνώμην γε τὴν ἐμὴν καλεόμενος Παπαῖος, Γῆ δὲ Ἀπί (variant: Ἀπία), Ἀπόλλων δὲ Γοιτόσυρος (variant: Οἰτόσυρος),[2] οὐρανίη δὲ Ἀφροδίτη Ἀργίμπασα (variant: Ἀρίππασα, Ἀρτίμπασα),[3] Ποσειδέων δὲ Θαγιμασάδας (variant: Θαγιμασά).
>
> The only gods whom they propitiate [by worship] are these: Hestia most of all, and next Zeus and Ge, whom they deem to be the wife of Zeus, after these, Apollo, and Aphrodite *Ourania*, and Heracles and Ares. All the Scythians worship these as gods, but the Scythians called Royal sacrifice also to Poseidon. In the Scythian language, Hestia is called Tabiti, Zeus (in my judgment most rightly so called) Papaios, Ge is Api, Apollo Goitosyros, Aphrodite *Ourania* Argimpasa, and Poseidon Thagimasades. (Translation by A. D. Godley, slightly modified)

This fragment aroused a number of questions, some of which are still debated. The majority of scholars agrees about the basic authenticity of the Scythian names (Bessonova 1983: 25), notwithstanding their variants in different manuscripts, which render the linguistic interpretation somewhat unsafe (Zhebelyov 1953: 30). The question is who is responsible for the *interpretatio Graeca* of the Scythian gods,

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[1] The words καὶ Ἡρακλέα are omitted in the text of Kallenberg's edition of the *Historia,* but retained by other editors.

[2] Orig. *Contra Cels*. 6.39: Γογγόσυρος; Hesych. s.v. Γοιτόσυρον· τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα. Σκύθαι.

[3] Orig. *Contra Cels*. 6.39: Ἀργίμπασα; Hesych. s.v. Ἀρτίμηασαν· Οὐρανίαν Ἀφροδίτην, ὑπὸ Σκυθῶν.

Herodotus himself (Zhebelyov 1953: 31; Rayevskiy 1977b: 57)[4] or the Black Sea Greeks (Bessonova 1983: 26). It is impossible to imagine that after two centuries of contacts with the local population, Greek colonists did not equate the Scythian deities with their own, as they always did wherever they settled. Moreover, Herodotus himself said that to identify Papaios as Zeus was, in his opinion, absolutely right (4.59), thus emphasizing that there was a common opinion that he accepted. The correspondence between the Scythian and the Greek gods must have been more or less established when Herodotus toured the Black Sea coast, and he had only to record the information and arrange it for his Greek readers.

Furthermore, the wholesale use of Greek objects of art with representations of Greek gods, alone or together with indigenous cultic symbols and images, in Scythian complexes of an indisputable cultic nature, such as tombs, proves that Greek cult images, in their turn, were submitted to *interpretatio Scythica.* This influenced the iconography of emerging Scythian anthropomorphic art and most probably also Scythian religious conceptions, despite the professed hostility of the Scythians towards foreign rituals (Her. 4.76).

The cult of seven main gods is characteristic of the pantheons of the Iranian peoples, beginning with the Persians of the Achaemenian period (Marinovich and Koshelenko 1977: 120), through the Scythians and the Alans to the present-day Ossetians (Abayev 1962), notwithstanding the difference in composition of these pantheons. The order of gods in Herodotus' list might be based on some cultic formulae, used in oaths and other ceremonies, which were naturally very archaic, reminiscences of bygone beliefs, rather than reflections of the actual situation (Bessonova 1983: 54; Rayevskiy 1985: 37). The hierarchy of the seven Scythian gods is ostensibly divided into three levels (Marinovich and Koshelenko 1977: 119):

Tabiti-Hestia
Papaios-Zeus Api-Gaia
Goitosyros-Apollo Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* Heracles Ares

The gods of the first and the second level, presumably the most ancient and less individualized, are opposed to the "younger" gods, anthropomorphic and much more active, hence closer to humans (Bessonova 1991: 87).

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[4] In his later book Rayevskiy (1985: 36) however claims just the opposite, that Herodotus copied a Scythian liturgical formula.

The domination of the female deities in the Scythian pantheon (Abayev 1962: 448) might be reminiscent of the former importance of women in their society (Petrov and Makarevich 1963; Terenozhkin 1977: 35). Yet this phenomenon also resulted from purely religious reasons. The origin and cults of the indigenous goddesses of the South Russian steppes are controversial. What follows is an attempt to clarify those aspects of the problem that are important for the evaluation of the impact of local beliefs on the religion of the Bosporan kingdom.

1.2.1.1 *Tabiti*

Tabiti-Hestia was venerated "most of all" by the Scythians (Her. 4.59). King Idanthyrsos maintained that his sovereigns are "Zeus, his forefather, and Hestia, the queen of the Scythians:"

> . . . δεσπότας δὲ ἐμοὺς ἐγὼ Δία τε νομίζω τὸν ἐμὸν πρόγονον καὶ Ἱστίην τὴν Σκυθέων βασίλειαν μούνους εἶναι (Her. 4.127).
>
> . . . I regard my masters solely Zeus my forefather and Hestia, queen of the Scythians.

An oath by the "royal hearths" (τὰς βασιληίας ἱστίας) was considered the most sacred; its breaking was believed to cause the king's illness and was punished with death (Her. 4.68).

The name of Tabiti is almost unanimously regarded as affiliated with the Indo-European root *tap-*, "to heat" (Vasmer 1923: 16-17; Abayev 1949: 21, 24; Widengren 1965: 158). Abayev (1962: 448) translates the name as "the heater," comparing it to the old Iranian *tapayati*, and regards her as a goddess of the hearth, not unlike the Greek Hestia (cf. Kretschmer 1923: 937).[5] Artamonov (1961: 58) goes even further: in his opinion, Tabiti was a patron of society and state, as well as of families. Hestia, the Greek counterpart of Tabiti, was indeed the focal point of private homes, as well as civic communities, and could represent even the whole of Greece as the ever-burning hearth in the temple at Delphi (Burkert 1985: 170). Tabiti preserved the family and the clan, and as the guardian of the royal hearth she ensured the well-being of the whole tribe, exactly as Hestia of the Greek prytaneum embodied the unity and prosperity of the polis. It must be in this function that Tabiti appeared as the "queen of Scythians," so that an offense to the royal *hestiai* affected the entire tribe and had to be averted at any price. In this respect, Tabiti may be compared to Persian *Hestia* whom Xenophon always listed first, before Zeus and other deities (*Cyr.* 6.1.1. and 7.5.57). Thus, Ἱστίη ἡ Σκυθέων βασίλεια approaches the Iranian notion of divine bliss, the igneous *xvarenah*[6] (Rayevskiy 1977b: 103), or even the fire protecting specifically the king, *vahran* (Duchesne-Guillemin 1962: 204). However, the Iranian heavenly fire was a manifestation of divinity rather than of an independent deity (Duchesne-Guillemin 1962; Widengren 1965: 58). To mention fire at the beginning and the end of a religious ceremony was a common Indo-European usage (Dumézil 1966: 317), which was also valid for the Greeks (*GGR* 1 338).

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[5] The hearth and the hearth chain were highly venerated by the Ossetians; an oath by one's hearth was most sacred (Miller 1882: 205); the maintenance of the eternal fire in the hearth was entrusted to women (Kaloyev 1967: 133).

Idanthyrsos' remark (Her. 4.127),[7] mentioned above, may be interpreted as hinting that Tabiti was in a way linked with ancestral spirits, like Roman Vesta (El'nitzkiy 1960: 50), but that is the limit of the possible speculations about the chthonic features in the image of Tabiti. It has been suggested that Tabiti be associated with the concepts of earth and fertility (Rostovtzeff 1922: 107; El'nitzkiy 1950: 50; Shramko 1957: 197) and regarded as the foremother of the Scythians (Artamonov 1961: 58; Petrov 1963: 23). These opinions are unconvincing, since they are based exclusively on the female gender of Tabiti and theories about "the vestiges of matriarchy" in Scythian society. In keeping with the sexual taboos surrounding the hearth (Burkert 1985: 170), Greek Hestia remained an eternal virgin, as did the Roman Vestals, and the evidence about Tabiti provides no reason to believe that she performed any fertility functions.

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[6] The *Zamyad Yasht* of the *Avesta* is almost entirely devoted to *xvarenah*. For the concept of *xvarenah* see Duchesne-Guillemin 1963; Campbell 1966: 204–211; Litvinskiy 1968; Carter 1974: 175–177; Yarshater 1983: 345; Gnoli 1989: 148–151, with extensive bibliography. For the royal *xvarenah* see Duchesne-Guillemin 1963: 25–26; Widengren 1965: 59.

The importance of *xvarenah* in the beliefs of the Iranian peoples of South Russia is attested by a series of Scythian and Sarmatian composite names, having *pharn* as one of the components (Grantovskiy 1970: 157–158; Kuz'mina 1976: 59).

[7] These words, as well as the oath by "royal hearths" (Her. 4.68) may be compared with an inscription of Darius the Great, saying (Hjerrild 1990: 142–143):

> Saith Darius the King: May Ahura Mazdah bear me aid, with the gods of the royal house and may Ahura Mazdah protect this country . . .

In Hjerrild's view (1990: 143), the phrase "the gods of the royal house" refers to Iranian *fravashis*, the genii of the family, Zoroastrian guardian spirits of mankind.

Rayevskiy (1977b: 88–90) emphasizes that Hestia and Tabiti were primordial sovereigns of fire, similar to Vedic Agni, thus linking Tabiti to the common Iranian cult of fire as the most important element, and ascribing her social function as the guardian of the king to her superior position among the other gods. The significance of fire in Iranian religions is obvious, and the royal hearths played an important role in Iranian beliefs (Widengren 1965: 164, 318). As there is evidence for the cult of fire among the semi-nomads of the northern Black Sea area (K. F. Smirnov 1964: 251–253; K. F. Smirnov and Popov 1969; Bessonova 1983: 31; *SSSV* 210–211, 218), it is only natural that Tabiti "the flaming" was the most venerated deity of the Scythians.

However, the attempt by Rayevskiy (1977b: 94–108) to interpret Tabiti's title "the queen of Scythians" as an expression of a rite of a sacred marriage between the first king and the goddess, re-enacted in an annual ritual, does not seem convincing (Bessonova 1983: 33–35). This hypothesis rests on two arguments: first, that βασίλεια in Herodotus in most cases means "the king's spouse," and second, that a number of Scythian objects of art depict the ritual of the sacred marriage of Tabiti and the king.

Herodotus uses the word βασίλεια in his account of Semiramis (1.184) and Nitocris (1.185), who reigned in their own right, and Tomiris (1.205), who had indeed inherited the power from her husband, but ruled alone. Hence, Tabiti did not necessarily need a consort to be thus titled. There are no signs indicating that objects of art, showing a goddess facing a standing man or a horseman, portrayed Tabiti;[8] moreover, in most cases the attributes imply the identification of this goddess as Aphrodite-Argimpasa (below, 1.2.3.5; Bessonova 1983: 35).

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[8] Rayevskiy (1977b: 105) suggests that a late Scythian relief (plate 10: 1) with the figures of a horseman, a woman and an altar between them (Popova 1974) represents the sacred marriage of the king and Tabiti, because above the human figures are a rectangle and a circle, which symbolize earthly and celestial fire in the ancient Indian tradition. However, if Indian symbolism of earthly and sacred fire, signified by a square and circle respectively (Widengren 1965: 32), was valid for the Scythians, these symbols would define the woman as a mortal and the man as a god. Rayevskiy (1977b: 105) confuses these symbols and interprets the circle as a celestial symbol, and the rectangle as an earthly one. As a result of this confusion, he argues that the goddess is Tabiti-Hestia.

On the whole, not a single character of Scythian art may be associated with Tabiti. This is quite natural, remembering that her Greek counterpart, worshipped as an immovable hearth, was also hardly given a human form (Burkert 1985: 170). The plurality of the royal *hestiai* (4.68) also indicates that Tabiti, like Hestia, lacked a distinct personality (Bessonova 1983: 55). This deity, conceived of rather as an incorporeal abstraction than a fully fledged female character, suited less than any other goddess the role of the divine spouse, granting power by means of sexual communion.

Zhebelyov (1953: 33) suggests that the royal *hestiai* are sacred objects linked with the royal hearth. This would mean that for Scythians the Iranian "gods of the royal house" had tangible physical form. To be sure, Herodotus (4.5–7) narrates a myth about the three sons of Targitaos, the first king and the ancestor of all the Scythians, and the gold objects—a cup, an ax, and a plow with a yoke[9]—that fell from the sky (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ . . . χρύσεα ποιήματα, ἄροτρόν τε καὶ ζυγὸν καὶ σάγαριν καὶ φιάλην πεσεῖν ἐς τὴν Σκυθικήν). These items caught fire when the older brothers approached them (ἐπιόντος καίεσθαι), but they allowed the younger brother to take them to his home (κομίσαι ἐς ἑωυτοῦ).[10] Thereafter the older brothers submitted to the royal power to the younger. The legend continues:

> τὸν δὲ χρυσὸν τοῦτον τὸν ἱρὸν φυλάσσουσι οἱ βασιλέες ἐς τὰ μάλιστα, καὶ θυσίῃσι μεγάλῃσι ἱλασκόμενοι μετέρχονται ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος. ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχων τὸν χρυσὸν τὸν ἱρὸν ἐν τῇ ὁρτῇ ὑπαίθριος κατακοιμηθῇ, οὗτος λέγεται ὑπὸ Σκυθέων οὐ διενιαυτίζειν· δίδοσθαι δὲ οἱ διὰ τοῦτο ὅσα ἂν ἵππῳ ἐν ἡμέρῃ μιῇ περιελάσῃ αὐτός. (Her. 4.7)

Further, Rayevskiy's argument starts from postulating Tabiti's marriage as if it were an established fact, and it is certainly not the case. In addition, it ignores the long tradition of depicting a horseman facing a female deity with obvious fertility-vegetation attributes. Even if one accepts that the rectangle/circle symbolism was meaningful for the Iranian peoples—which cannot be proven—this fire may be interpreted as being analogous of a flaming altar, appearing in some scenes showing a goddess facing a man (1.2.3.5).

[9] These or similar objects seem to remain Scythian sacred symbols of power later, as well. Curtius (7.8.18) in his desciption of the submission of the Scythians to Alexander, reports them to have given the conquerer a yoke of oxen, a plow, an arrow and a spear, and a goblet. Cf. Carter 1974: 183; Pritchett 1993: 213.

[10] These objects have been interpreted as symbols of Scythian social divisions (Christensen 1918; Benveniste 1938), and further, of the functional tripartition of Indo-Iranians (Dumézil 1930; Littleton 1973: 10; Grantovskiy 1970: 158, 208; Khazanov 1975a: 79–81).

> The kings guard this sacred gold most jealously, and every year offer to it solemn sacrifices of propitiation. Whoever possessing the sacred gold falls asleep in the open air, is said by the Scythians not to live out the year; for which reason as much land is given to him, as he can himself ride round in one day. (Translation by A. D. Godley, slightly modified)

These flaming sacred objects, bestowing royal power and kept in the house of the king, are likely to be the royal *hestiai* (Rayevskiy 1977b: 108).[11] The ceremonial sleep in a field with these objects probably symbolized an impregnation of the earth by a ritual substitute king, who received the land belonging to the king, only to be soon sacrificed: he was destined to live only until the next festival (Artamonov 1948; Bessonova 1983: 68–69), which probably marked the beginning of the New Year (Bessonova 1991: 88).

Rayevskiy (1977b: 106), in accordance with his hypothesis of the sacred marriage of Tabiti and the king, maintains that the union was between the king and the gold objects, symbolizing Tabiti. However, sacred marriage normally involved divine partners personifying the sphere of sexuality and fertility (Kramer 1969: 57–66; Frymer-Kensky 1992: 55–57), a domain which appears totally alien to what is known of Tabiti-Hestia. The person replacing the king possessed the gold attributes of royalty for one night only, just as he received the land, to make the symbolic identification with the real king complete.[12]

Tabiti-Hestia was an abstract notion of fire as the first and most important element as well as divine bliss, rather than a personified deity. This notion was represented by a fireplace, the sacral center of any community, from a family to a tribe. The king's hearth was therefore the inviolable symbol of the prosperity of his people, as well as a token of royal power. Tabiti, the deity of the most elementary force, could scarcely be depicted in art: indeed, not a single subject in Scythian art can be interpreted as her representation (Bessonova 1983: 35).[13] Conceived as an incarnation of primordial fire, on the one hand, and a symbol of supreme authority, on the other, Tabiti enjoyed great esteem, and may have been mentioned in the ritual more often and before the other deities, but hardly could have been a real godhead (cf. Bessonova 1983: 36).

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[11] Bessonova (1983: 32) is reluctant to identify these objects with the royal *hestiai*.

[12] As to the blazing nature of the gold objects, it might reflect the concept of the flamboyant luminosity of nobility and especially of princely power, that is expressed in the etymology of the words "lord," "prince," etc. in a number of Iranian languages (Benveniste 1966: 20–22).

[13] For an opposite opinion see Artamonov 1961: 64; Rudenko 1968: 58.

1.2.1.2 *Api*

The name of Api (’Απί or ’Απία in some manuscripts) is usually connected with the Avestan *api*—"water" (Vasmer 1923: 11; Nyberg 1938: 254; Abayev 1962: 449; Petrov 1963: 25; Widengren 1965: 159). According to another etymology, *Api* is a childish word of endearment meaning "mommy" (Zgusta 1933: 270; Abayev 1962: 449).[14] However, in Iranian tradition the earth as a life-giving principle is inseparably linked with water—fertilizing, nourishing, healing (Nyberg 1938: 254; Abayev 1949: 242; 1962: 449; Przyluski 1950: 26; Widengren 1965: 19; Dumézil 1970: 17; Rayevskiy 1977b: 46). Herodotus' interpretation of Api as Ge therefore does not contradict either etymology, and seems to imply that he considered the Scythian goddess as a primordial deity who gave birth to the first inhabitants of the world.[15]

The identification of Api with pre-Olympian Ge, belonging together with Ouranos to the first generation of gods (Hesiod. *Theog.* 117), the procreators of the world and the grandparents of the generation of Zeus, compelled Herodotus to specify the conjugal relations between Api-Ge and Papaios-Zeus, thus contrasting Scythian and Greek mythology (Bessonova 1983: 36). The cosmic union of the Mother Earth and the Sky Father exists in almost all Indo-European religions.[16] However, these primordial deities in many cases lack real personalities and stay on the margin of the polis religion, as Greek Ge (Burkert 1985: 175; Graf 1985: 360; 1993: 85) and the pre-Zoroastrian earth-mother Armaiti (Widengren 1965: 13, 159; Colpe

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In fact, there are hardly any visual representations of Hestia or Vesta in the art of Greece and Rome, with their much more anthropomorphized religions (Bessonova 1983: 35).

[14] While *Papaios*, according to Zgusta (1933:270) and Abayev (1962: 449), means "daddy". See also Cook 1914–40, 2: 292; Nyberg 1938: 254; Widengren 1965: 159.

[15] The idea of Zhebelyov (1953: 31), that Herodotus identified Api with Ge only because her Scythian name resembled the sound of the Homeric verse τηλόθεν ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης (*Il.* 1.270; 3.49; *Od.* 7.25; 16.18) just does not pay due credit to the capability of the Father of History to grasp the essence of foreign cultural phenomena.

[16] For this notion in Greek religion see *GGR* 1120.

1983: 829; Schwartz 1985: 669), who always remained rather abstract, especially as compared with Anahita, the embodiment of the life-giving waters and fertility in general (Bessonova 1983: 37).

A number of scholars regard the Scythian foremother, an ophidian creature connected with aquatic element (below, 1.2.2), as personification of Api-Ge (Artamonov 1961: 67; Rayevskiy 1977b: 45–51; Bessonova 1983: 37). This opinion rests on the autochthonity of this character, her function of genetrix, and her partnership with Zeus in some versions of the Scythian genealogical legend. However, Herodotus never alludes to any relation between Api and the Scythian foremother, who lacks any cosmic features and is called a nymph by Valerius Flaccus (6.52). The second version narrated by Herodotus (4.8–10) and the *Tabula Albana* credits Heracles, and not Zeus, with the fatherhood of the Scythians. The Scythian foremothers in all the legends appear as individual characters, and not just as an utterance of an abstract principle. They certainly possess obvious chthonic features, and Api was probably their mother—in fact, the nymph in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* is "earth-born"—nevertheless they remain distinct from her. Ge of the conventional Greek beliefs was the mother of gods and Titans, not mortals. Although in the Orphic anthropogony she was also the foremother of men via the Titans (Guthrie 1968: 320), and Herodotus was acquainted with the Orphic usage (Her. 2.81), it is improbable that he based his identification of Api as Ge on an esoteric doctrine, without even mentioning it. Thus Api, like Greek Ge, seems to have retired from interference in worldly affairs immediately after the world was created and the proper order of things established.

1.2.1.3 *Argimpasa*

The name of the Scythian counterpart of Aphrodite *Ourania* is rendered in the manuscripts either as 'Αργίμπασα, 'Αρτίμπασα, or 'Αρίππασα. The second part of the name is related to the Iranian *paya*—"pasture" (Vasmer 1923: 11–12) and *pati*—"lord" (Abayev 1949: 176), both originating from the same root.[17] As to the initial part, the reading 'Αρτίμπασα is more plausible than the two others. Two dedications to Artimpasa from Tusculum (*CIG* III. 6014, *IG* XIV. 85*, cf. How and Wells 1928, 1: 325; Widengren 1965: 160; Bessonova 1983: 37), if not a forgery (they are classified as *falsae vel suspectae*) can serve as additional proof that 'Αρτίμπασα was the correct name of the goddess. The misspelling 'Αργίμπασα can be easily explained as a banal mistake of the scribe, who wrote Γ instead of T. The Iranian goddess *Arti*, considered a patron of fertility and marriage (Nyberg 1938: 66, 262; Abayev 1962: 449), was also worshipped by the Sogdians, closely affiliated with the Scythians, as 'rtωγ, *Art(i)vax, Good *Arti* (Abayev 1962: 450). Nyberg (1938: 254) regarded Artimpasa as basically a fertility goddess, while Vasmer (1923: 12) emphasized her ethical role as the guardian of laws. However, since the reading 'Αργίμπασα was accepted in most editions of Herodotus, it is still used in the works even of those scholars who agree that it may be erroneous (Bessonova 1983: 37).

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[17] See Vasmer (1923: 11–12) and El'nitzkiy (1960) for different opinions, which seem less convincing.

Herodotus (4.67) relates that Scythian soothsayers, exercising traditional prophetic art, divined by willow withies,[18] while androgynic *Enareis*, who used lime rind,[19] maintained that Aphrodite endowed them with their prophetic capacities:

> αὕτη μὲν σφι ἡ μαντικὴ πατρωΐη ἐστί. οἱ δὲ 'Ενάρεες οἱ ἀνδρόγυνοι τὴν 'Αφροδίτην σφίσι λέγουσι μαντικὴν δοῦναι.
>
> This manner of divination is traditional. The effeminate *Enareis* say that Aphrodite gave them the art of divination.

---

[18] Cf. Amm. Marc. 31.2.24. Strabo (15.3.15) reported the Cappadocian *magi* to have performed similar rites in the sanctuaries of Anaitis (Anahita). A similar Ossetian method of divination is described by Miller (1882: 201; cf. Widengren 1965: 163). Archaeologically, the only discovery that can be interpreted as prophetic withies was in a Sarmatian tumulus on the Ilek River (southern Ural foothills), where a bundle of poplar twigs 60 cm. long, with a round cultic vessel above it, was placed near the hand of the deceased, who is believed to have been a prophet-priest (Smirnov K. F. 1975a: 106). A priest(?) with a bundle of twigs is represented on a gold plaque from the Oxus (Amu-Darya) treasure (Dalton 1964: pl. 14). See also Khazanov 1975b: 170.

Iranian Anahita is portrayed with twig bundles in the *Avesta* (*Aban Yasht* 30 127); she probably borrowed this attribute from the Anatolian fertility-goddesses, twigs symbolizing fertility and prosperity, and used in cruel flagellation rites in honor of the Great Goddess (Przyluski 1950: 29).

For the *baresman*—twig bundle—in the pre-Zoroastrian Iranian cult, see Widengren 1965: 29; in Graeco-Persian and later iconography, see Cook 1014–40, 1: 745.

[19] The Alans prophesied in a similar way (Amm. Marc. 31.2.24). Modern Ossetians, however, used canvas (Miller 1882: 201), as did some Siberian shamans (Dovatur, Kallistov, and Shishova 1982: 305).

Scythians believed that Aphrodite had not only bestowed upon the *Enareis* the prophetic gift, but had initially punished them with a female disease, causing sexual impotency. In Syrian Palestine, where Scythians arrived during their occupation of Asia, some of them plundered the highly venerated sanctuary of Aphrodite *Ourania* in Ascalon (Her. 1.105):[20]

> τοῖσι δὲ τῶν Σκυθέων συλήσασι τὸ ἱρὸν τὸ ἐν Ἀσκάλωνι καὶ τοῖσι τούτων αἰεὶ ἐκγόνοισι ἐνέσκηψε ἡ θεὸς θήλειαν νοῦσον· ὥστε ἅμα λέγουσί τε οἱ Σκύθαι διὰ τοῦτο σφέας νοσέειν, καὶ ὁρᾶν παρ' ἑωυτοῖσι τοὺς ἀπικνεομένους ἐς τὴν Σκυθικὴν χώρην ὡς διακέαται τοὺς καλέουσι Ἐνάρεας οἱ Σκύθαι.
>
> The Scythians who pillaged the sanctuary, and their descendants forever, were afflicted by the goddess with the female sickness: inasmuch that the Scythians say that this is the cause of their disease, and that those who come to Scythia can see there the plight of the men whom they call *Enareis*. (Translation by A. S. Godley, modified)

Scythian *Enareis* are also mentioned in the pseudo-hippocratic treatise *De aere* (22), where they are called ἀναριεῖς. These eunuchs belonged to the most powerful nobility, wore women's dress, performed women's jobs, spoke like women (. . . γυναικεῖα ἐργάζονται καὶ ὡς αἱ γυναῖκες διαλέγονται ὁμοίως . . .),[21] and enjoyed special respect because of the fear they inspired.

Herodotus' definition of *Enareis* as οἱ ἀνδρόγυνοι (4.67) is quite correct: *nara* is the Iranian for "male," with α *privativum*—"not male," "effeminate;" ἀναριεῖς, the spelling of *De aere*, is therefore more accurate (Miller 1887: 132; Meuli 1935: 131; Abayev 1949: 151; Widengren 1965: 163; Grantovskiy 1970: 304).

Contrary to Herodotus, Pseudo-Hippocrates considered the "female sickness" of *Enareis* a result of continuous horse riding, although he knew that Scythians believed it to have been inflicted by a deity (θεῷ; *De aere* 22); his rationalization has been accepted by some modern scholars (Minns 1913: 45), and it is indeed plausible in terms of modern medicine (Taylor 1994: 397; 1996: 210–211). Kretschmer (1923: 938) suggested that the "female sickness" was caused by a venereal disease that Scythians contracted from the prostitutes of the Ascalon temple. However, these rational explanations over-simplify the significance of the phenomenon that is ostensibly associated with the ritual sphere. Both appearance and behavior of *Enareis* are manifestly transvestite (Halliday 1910/11; Khazanov 1973: 43; Taylor 1996: 211–214). Meuli has brilliantly demonstrated the shamanic nature of *Enareis*, transvestism being one of the elements of the shamanic complex (Meuli 1935: 127–130; Nyberg 1938: 255; Widengren 1965: 163; Tolstov 1948: 323).[22] In the shamanic cultures of Northern Eurasia and Central Asia, the *transformed* shamans, those who "changed" their sex, were believed to be the most powerful, and frightened laymen terribly (Shternberg 1939: 157–159; Tolstov 1948: 324–326, Artamonov 1961: 86; Atkinson 1992: 318).[23] Among the Scythian *Enareis*, this transformation must have occurred relatively late in their lives, because according to Herodotus, Aphrodite punished with the "female disease" not only the plunderers of her Ascalon sanctuary, but their descendants, as well (1.105).[24] As to the antiquity of the phenomenon, its roots may be very ancient,[25] but the Scythians themselves contrasted the prophetic techniques of *Enareis* against ἡ μαντικὴ πατρωίη, and told the legend about Aphrodite's curse, that had been inflicted upon them in the historical, and not mythical past, thus emphasizing the recent origin of *Enareis*. In any case, their transvestite androgyny fits very well the cult of Levantine Aphrodite *Ourania*,[26] so it is only natural that Greek travelers, observing the strange Scythian custom, deemed it appropriate to connect it with the eunuchs in service of the goddess (Halliday 1910/11: 99).[27]

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[20] Since Scythians served in Nebuchadnezzar's army, which destroyed Ascalon in 604 BC, it is possible that Herodotus described an episode of this campaign (Stager 1992: 104).

[21] Ὡς αἱ γυναῖκες διαλέγονται ὁμοίως means not just "feminine voice" (Dovatur, Kallistov, and Shishova 1982: 305), but the use of grammatical forms befitting female speakers and probably specifically female vocabulary or expressions. Greeks themselves made a distinction between male and female speech (Gilleland 1980; Taaffe 1991: 101), so that Pseudo-Hippocrates could treat the Scythian phenomenon on the basis of personal experience.

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[22] According to Dawson (1929: 6) and Khazanov (1975b: 89), *Enareis* are to be connected with the phenomenon of couvade. However, there is not a single mention of any connection of *Enareis* with childbirth, the only hint coming from the Ossetian *Nartes* epos (Dumézil 1946). El'nitzkiy (1977: 178) identified them with the Scythian tribe of Agrippeans, which seems improbable, since there is no evidence to this effect (Khazanov 1975b: 169).

[23] It has been suggested recently that the Sokolova Mogila tumulus in Western Scythia be interpreted as a burial of a transvestite biological male—one of the *Enareis* (Taylor 1996: 214).

[24] Aristotle probably means this θήλεια νοῦσος, when he mentions the hereditary emasculation of the Scythian kings (*Eth. Nic.* 1150 B): ἐν τοῖς τῶν Σκύθων βασιλεῦσι ἡ μαλακία διὰ τὸ γένος (Dovatur, Kallistov and Shishova 1982: 306).

[25] Cf. third–second century BC Siberian Scythian burials of men, containing female decorations and utensils and not a single article used by males (Troitzkaya 1987).

[26] In Greek usage, the phrase θήλεια νοῦσος could be applied to emasculated priests of an Asiatic goddess: Γύνιδες γοῦν τινὲς ἄνδρες τὸ σεμνὸν τῆς φύσεως ἀπαρνησά-

According to Clement of Alexandria, Anacharsis, having become emasculated in Greece, communicated the "female disease" to all the Scythians (*Protrept.* 2.20). Herodotus related the story of Anacharsis' assassination in response to his attempt to introduce the cult of *Meter Theon* from Cyzicus: he performed her a nocturnal ritual in a land called Hylaia (Woodland), playing tympans, his dress covered with images (ἐκδησάμενος ἀγάλματα; Her. 4.76). Clement stated that Anacharsis perished because of his piety towards Cybele of Pessinus. Thus, according to all the versions, *Enareis* are affiliated with an orgiastic cult[28] of a Near Eastern fertility goddess, Aphrodite *Ourania*-Astarte, often scarcely distinct from Cybele and Meter.

On the other hand, thousands of gold pendants, usually depicting deities, were found in the graves of noble Scythians, decorating their clothes (*SSSV* 59); the fashion of Anacharsis' dress certainly fits Scythian customs much more than those of Cyzicus. Pendants from a number of fourth-century BC tumuli represent so-called "maenads," dancing women who clutch beasts' heads and weapons, and are apparently engaged in orgiastic rites (Ryabova 1979; Bessonova 1983: 75; Rayevskiy 1985: 175–176). The entire scene of a man in a jingling attire, clanging a tambourine in the depths of a forest, very much resembles shamanic séances (Artamonov 1961: 85). Therefore the rites of *Enareis* were probably an amalgamation of local Scythian and imported Levantine cultic practices (Grantovskiy 1970: 304–305; Khazanov 1973: 45; 1975b: 177).

Scythian Argimpasa was certainly not completely identical with Astarte of Ascalon, but for Greeks in general and Herodotus in particular both of them were Aphrodite *Ourania*. The question is whether it was so for the Scythians themselves. Herodotus called the Scythian gods by their original names only once (4.59) and used Greek analogies elsewhere. Therefore it is not absolutely clear whether Herodotus

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μενοι θηλείᾳ νόσῳ τὴν δαίμονα ἱλεοῦντο (Euseb., *Vita Constantini* 3.55; quoted by Halliday 1910/11: 98)

[27] The androgyny of the Scythian goddess finds perhaps its expression in a very curious terracotta figurine, probably produced on the Bosporus, which was discovered in a late Scythian (first century AD) grave near the village of Krasny Mayak, in the Lower Dnieper area (Symonovich 1981). The figurine is a herm with male genitals; the head is however female, with a typical female headdress and a radiate nimbus.

[28] Cf. Dionysiac elements in the Persian cult of Anahita (below in this section).

meant Aphrodite of Ascalon or Argimpasa when he described the methods of *Enareis* in his fourth book, and still less explicit is the opinion of the Scythians themselves. The story about the pillage of the Ascalon sanctuary is indeed narrated in the first book of the *History*, before the mention of Argimpasa in the fourth book, but since Herodotus could have learnt it only from the Scythians, the same question about the Scythian point of view may be asked. The answer must take into account the archaeological material. Numerous Greek-style (and usually Greek-made) representations of Aphrodite and Eros, that were discovered in the tombs of Scythian nobility,[29] indicate that the image of Aphrodite was meaningful to these people; that is, they linked it with their own conceptions, most probably, with their belief in Argimpasa-Aphrodite. Hence the Scythians of Herodotus' age, who regarded the "female disease" of the *Enareis* as a result of Aphrodite's wrath, were aware of the correspondence of this Aphrodite to their Argimpasa.

Therefore it is important to comprehend the peculiarity of the Ascalon cult of Aphrodite *Ourania*. This ancient sanctuary of the goddess, the most ancient in Herodotus' opinion (1.105), continued to be venerated during the later epochs, Aphrodite frequently appearing as the tutelary goddess of Ascalon on coins of the first centuries AD (Schürer 1979: 31).[30] The equation of Aphrodite *Ourania* at Ascalon with Semitic Astarte is beyond doubt (Boedeker 1974: 4; Schürer 1979: 31).[31] Ishtar, it should be mentioned, was believed to change men into women and women into men (Flemberg 1994: 14), which is also a characteristic feature of the Ascalonian goddess.

Related to this goddess was the local cult of Derceto, described in detail by Diodorus (2.4. 2–6; cf. Dussaud 1945: 394–395). That Aphrodite-Astarte of Ascalon was considered implacable to those who insulted her, illustrates not only the example of the *Enareis*, but also the tragic story of Derceto, as narrated by the Ascalonians: Derceto, having offended Aphrodite, suffered a great shame and grief, and ultimately threw herself into a deep lake near Ascalon, her body transformed into a fish (Diod. 2.4.3). This is the beginning of the foundation legend of Derceto's sanctuary:

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[29] The instance of the area of the Bosporus is cited above.

[30] On a coin from Hadrian's time the goddess is called Φανήβαλος, "the face of Baal," just as Tinit of Carthage (Helck 1971: 270; Bonnet 1996: 46). Cf. Hesych. s.v. Σαλαμβώ· ἡ Ἀφροδίτη παρὰ Βαβυλωνίοις (Σαλαμβώ being the Greek for צלם, בעל "the image of Baal," Helck 1971: 270).

[31] Worth noting is the Delian dedication to Ἀστάρτῃ παλαιστίνῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ οὐρανίᾳ (*IDelos* 2305; cf. Caquot 1958: 57; Bruneau 1970: 346–347; Schürer 1979: 31; Baslez 1986: 301).

> Κατὰ τὴν Συρίαν τοίνυν ἔστι πόλις ᾿Ασκάλων, καὶ ταύτης οὐκ ἄπωθεν λίμνη μεγάλη καὶ βαθεῖα πλήρης ἰχθύων. παρὰ δὲ ταύτην ὑπάρχει τέμενος θεᾶς ἐπιφανοῦς, ἣν ὀνομάζουσιν οἱ Σύροι Δερκετοῦν· αὕτη δὲ τὸ μὲν πρόσωπον ἔχει γυναικός, τὸ δ' ἄλλο σῶμα πᾶν ἰχθύος . . . (Diod. 2.4.2).
>
> Moreover, in Syria there is a city of Ascalon, and not far from it a large and deep lake full of fish. Next to this lake there is a sanctuary of a distinguished goddess, that the Syrians call Derceto. She has a face of a woman, and all the rest of her body is that of a fish . . .

It is curious both that Herodotus did not refer to this distinguished goddess and her temenos, and that Diodorus failed to mention the famous Ascalon sanctuary of Aphrodite, who played such a remarkable role in the story. Hence probably there was one sanctuary, where one deity was worshipped under several names. In fact, doves, sacred to Derceto (Diod. 2.4.4–6; Lucian *De Dea Syria* 14, 54) and represented on the coins of Ascalon (Robert 1971: 96), belonged first of all to Astarte-Aphrodite. The custom of allowing these birds unrestricted freedom and immunity from any offense inside the city was common to Ascalon and Aphrodisias (Robert 1971: 91–97). The seaborn Aphrodite (Hesiod. *Theog.* 188), *Anadyomene* and *Pelagia*, with her swimming first to Cythera, and thence to Cyprus, was no less at home in the water than the fish-like Derceto. Both Aphrodite and Derceto[32] were represented surrounded by dolphins (J. Ferguson 1982: 19–20). However, in Ascalon Derceto, an Aramaic deity, was presumably a later development of Philistine Astarte (Dussaud 1945: 396; Schürer 1979: 32).

The Semitic name of Derceto is Atargatis[33] (Strabo 16.4.27; Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 5.19.81; Lucian. *De Dea Syria* 14); according to Mnaseas, it was Atargatis herself who was drowned in Ascalon (Athen. 346 DE). Her name (עתרעתה [*'Ath'arthah*] composed of עתר [*'Athar*]-Astarte and עתה [*'Athah*]) discloses her connection with Astarte (Dussaud 1945: 393; Przyluski 1950: 144; Contenau 1949: 81; Schürer 1979: 31; cf. Hörig 1984a: 1539–1540), and Ata (or Anath, Asherah or

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[32] Aphrodite: the most famous instance is the statue in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Derceto: reliefs from Khirbet et-Tannur, the Negev (Aboda), Hatra, and Petra (J. Ferguson 1982: 20).

[33] For a survey of current research on Atargatis see Bilde 1990.

Tannit, Bilde 1990: 151, 159). Of eighty inscriptions mentioning Atargatis, which were studied by Bilde (1990: 161), thirty-five identify her as *Hagne* Aphrodite (cf. *GGR* 2 123; Bruneau 1970: 346; Hörig 1984a: 1569–1570). Romans called Derceto *Dea Syria* (Hörig 1984a: 1538), and Lucian compares her with several goddesses—Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, Nemesis, and Moirae (*De Dea Syria* 32)—which probably reflects the polyfunctionality of this divine personality (Hörig 1984a: 1539–1546), but may also result from the later trend to theocrasia (Bilde 1990: 171–172).

Atargatis, the supreme goddess of Syria (Hörig 1984a: 1539; Bilde 1990: 151), and initially a water-deity (Bilde 1990: 151), had sacred pools with fish not only in Ascalon, but also in Hierapolis, the major center of her cult (Hörig 1984a: 1550–1554; Bilde 1990: 151; Millar 1993: 243–246), in Edessa, in Smyrna and elsewhere (*LSAM* 17; Lucian. *De Dea Syria* 44–48; Dussaud 1945: 393; Glueck 1937: 374; *GGR* 2 127; Helck 1971: 271; Hörig 1984a: 1554–1565);[34] she was portrayed at Khirbet et-Tannur, far inland, with fish (Glueck 1937). Fish (and the representation of the goddess as pisciform) presumably symbolize the fructifying power of water (Schürer 1979: 31), and the remarkable fecundity of fish explains perhaps the development of the symbol (J. Ferguson 1982: 19).

Atargatis-Derceto was also a vegetation goddess, represented at Khirbet et-Tannur and elsewhere with leaves around her forehead, as well as vines, figs, pomegranates, etc. (Glueck 1937: figs. 14, 15; J. Ferguson 1982: 17). Her depictions with lions at Khirbet et-Tannur (Glueck 1937: 373), Hatra, Dura-Europos, and elsewhere (Bilde 1990: 168, figs. 2, 6, 8) imply a connection with Cybele and the idea of animal fecundity (J. Ferguson 1982: 17; cf. Helck 1971: 271, Hörig 1984a: 1539, 1542). Lucian, in fact, stated that the Syrian Goddess greatly resembled Cybele (*De Dea Syria* 15) and reported that mythology and cults of both goddesses included self castration and transvestite rites (*De Dea Syria* 15–27, 50–52; Hörig 1984a: 1547; Bilde 1990: 156, 174–176).

In Ascalon however Derceto seems to have been subordinate to Aphrodite-Astarte. The pairing of a great and a minor goddess, the latter only semi-human, is known elsewhere. In Ephesos, Aphrodisias, and other cultic centers, where essentially the same Great Goddess was worshipped, a female creature with tendril-shaped legs also appeared[35] (below, 1.2.3.2). This splitting of the fertility-vegetation deity into two figures, one of them august and entirely anthropomorphic, and the second one semi-bestial, existed also in the Scytho-Maeotian religion.

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[34] There were pools sacred to Astarte, as well (Bonnet 1996: 34).

This merging of Aphrodite-Astarte-Atargatis at Ascalon is very significant in the definition of Argimpasa's character as a vegetation-fertility goddess with clear androgynic traits,[36] emphasizing her obvious Levantine connections. One more meaningful aspect that will be treated in detail below is the possible congruity of the images of fish-shaped Derceto and the anguipede Scytho-Maeotian goddess.

Scythians were exposed to the influence of local cults during their prolonged stay in the Near East (Rostovtzeff 1922: 107; Bessonova 1982: 38), when isolation from the homeland must have weakened their immunity to alien religion. The Ascalon episode was singled out by the Scythians themselves and Herodotus after them because of the outstanding fame of the sanctuary. It was the joint overwhelming power of the great cults of the Levantine goddesses that subdued the Scythians and made them acknowledge it in the image of their Argimpasa-Aphrodite.

This character does not seem entirely to have been borrowed from the Near East during the expedition to Asia. To the west of Scythia Thracians, whose Anatolian origin and later connections seem now rather certain (Mallory 1991: 264), worshipped a Great Mother goddess, mistress of animals and power-giver, whose most popular name was Bendis (Fol and Marazov 1977: 22–24, 34, 48–55).[37]

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[35] In Phigalia (Arcadia) a goddess whose body below the hips was pisciform was worshipped under the name of Eurynome (Paus. 8.41.6; Jost 1985: 412–414). The people of Phigalia were convinced that Eurynome was an epithet of Artemis, although Pausanias himself (8.41.5) supported the opinion of "experts in ancient legends," who maintained that Eurynome was an Oceanid, mentioned in the Iliad (18.398). Since the latter explanation looks like a scholarly construction, the popular belief deserves credit, which means that in conservative Arcadia the same pairing of a great goddess and her semi-bestial companion existed. It is scarcely possible to view this couple as influenced by the image of Derceto (Laumonier 1958: 97).

[36] Herodotus' identification of *Ourania* with the Persian Mithra (1.131, see also below), if it was not a mere error (Burkert 1988: 18), may supply additional evidence on the androgyny of Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* (Przyluski 1950:136–137; Bessonova 1982: 38; cf. Widengren 1965: 121). For an alternative explanation, see Schwartz 1985: 694.

A priest of a female divinity Μίθρα or Μίθρη is mentioned in an extremely interesting Greek epitaph, discovered near Dijon (Vollgraff 1949). In fact, the legend Μιορο, meaning Mithra, appears on some late first–early second century AD Bactrian coins, which portray a goddess holding a cornucopia (Vollgraff 1949: 61–62). Firmicus Maternus (*De err. prof. rel.* 4; cf. Vollgraff 1949: 62) reported that the Persians worship fire as both male and female. It seems therefore that Herodotus' comparison of Aphrodite *Ourania* to Mithra was based on his evaluation of an actual cult.

The Scythian Argimpasa must have had Iranian roots, as well. First of all, Scythians and other peoples of Iranian stock who inhabited the South Russian steppes certainly preserved elements of the ancient, pre-Zoroastrian, Iranian beliefs. Secondly, during the first millennium BC these peoples were exposed to the influences of the Iranian cultures of Asia Minor and Central Asia. Although in some cases the exact origin of a certain phenomenon is hardly discernible, in general, the total weight of the primary Iranian elements was much more considerable than that of the later adoptions.

Iranians worshipped Anahita, the patroness of husbandry and fertility, the mistress of celestial waters. The permanent triple title of the goddess in the *Avesta*, Aredvi Sura Anahita, the Humid, Strong and Immaculate, signifies her synthetic nature. The goddess was multivalent (Widengren 1965: 19; Dumézil 1970: 17, 74), representing three functions: sovereignty (the Strong), priestly force (the Pure), and fecundity (the Humid). All of these functions are present in the image of Argimpasa.

The cult of Anahita was re-established and glorified by Artaxerxes II (Clem. Alexandr. *Protrept.* 5.58; cf. Wikander 1946: 211; Huart 1972: 68; Ghirshman 1976: 260; Debord 1982: 265; Frye 1983: 121). It was encouraged by the Achaemenian kings and became preponderant under the Parthians (Ghirshman 1954: 269). The cult of Anahita spread to the Pontus, Cappadocia, and Armenia (Ghirshman 1954: 270).

However, the *Avesta* evidence attests that Anahita was a pre-Zoroastrian deity (Boyce 1985b: 1003).[38] Notwithstanding some foreign, mainly Assyro-Babylonian, traces in her personality (Przyluski 1950: 42; Huart 1972: 82; Schwartz 1985: 670), Anahita the "life-increasing," "herd-increasing," and "wealth-increasing" reveals many features of an ancient fertility goddess (Nyberg 1938: 216; Wikander 1946: 211; Widengren 1965: 19; Boyce 1985b: 1003),[39] close probably to Ashi (Schwartz 1985: 671). The Chaldean impact made her the goddess of the planet Venus (Frye 1983: 231; Boyce 1985b: 1004). Assyro-Babylonian beliefs that shaped the image of Anahita were basically associated with the cult of Ishtar-Astarte (Boyce 1985b: 1005–1006), which played such an important role in the emergence of the Greek cult of Aphrodite.

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[37] Besides the prolonged contacts between Thracians and Scythians since the early first millennium BC, the two peoples might be related, probably via Cimmerians (Frye 1983: 71–72; Diakonoff 1985: 94).

Settled agricultural people of Thracian stock lived in Scythia before the arrival of the semi-nomadic Scythians (Sulimirski 1985: 152). Fertility-cults of these agriculturalists are likely to have been absorbed by Scythians, at least to a certain extent.

[38] The cult of Anahita, as well as that of other Persian deities (Wikander 1946), contained patent elements of fire-cult (Boyce 1985b: 1005; Raditsa 1983: 101). The Great Goddess of the Iranian fire-worshipping tribes (K. F. Smirnov 1975b) of South Russia might resemble Anahita in this respect, which could explain depictions of blazing altars and fire-symbols on the objects of art representing the goddess.

Outside influences may be responsible for the relatively early anthropomorphizing of Anahita's image (Frye 1983: 133); in fact, in the *Avesta* she is the only deity having a distinct personality (Bessonova 1983: 40). Anahita began to be represented in cultic statues before other Iranian deities, under Artaxerxes II in the fourth century BC (Chaumont 1965: 169; Frye 1983: 121; Boyce 1985b: 1004).

The Persian Anahita, at least in later periods, had also an orgiastic aspect, which is manifest, for instance, in her ability to drive people into Bacchic frenzy (Strabo 11.8.4–5).[40] In Armenia, crowds of sacred prostitutes served in her numerous sanctuaries (Strabo 11.14.16; cf. Helck 1971: 235–238; Boyce 1985b: 1004; Chaumont 1985: 1007; Olshausen 1990: 1870), embellished with the goddess' cult statues (Widengren 1965: 186).[41] In Cappadocia, her priests, similarly to Scythian soothsayers, used bundles of twigs in their rites (Strabo 15.3.15).[42] In the Parthian and Sasanian periods, fire was installed in Anahita's temples (Russel 1987: 246).[43]

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[39] *Sura* and *anahita* are common Avestan adjectives, and only *aredvi*, "moist," "humid," is special to this deity. The goddess therefore seems to have been the personification of a great mythical river, the source of the world waters (Boyce 1985b: 1003). Schwartz (1985: 671) maintains, however, that Anahita was a later construct rather than a deity of old Indo-Iranian parentage.

[40] For the Bacchic festival of Sacaia, celebrated in Zela (Strabo 11.8.4–5), and its connection with the cult of Anahita, see Olshausen 1990: 1871; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 289–292. Rappoport (1978) suggested that the "Hall of dancing masks" in Khwarezm housed a Bacchic cult, which was celebrated in honor of Anahita.

For Bacchic scenes in Sasanian iconography see Carter 1974: 198–202.

[41] For a most detailed account of Anahita's cult in Armenia see Russel 1987: 235–260.

[42] For the sanctuaries of Anahita-Anaitis in Anatolia see Debord 1982: 265; 443–444, with the map on p. 266.

[43] For the Sasanian Anahita-worship, see Lukonin 1969: 96–97.

The local Bosporan goddess, whose priestess was interred in the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus, was belligerent (1.1.2.2); this goddess was probably represented in the guise of Athena, wearing a helmet and accompanied by fish and lions (1.1.6). On the other hand, it was to Anahita that the warriors in the *Avesta* addressed their requests to grant them victory in battle (*Aban Yasht* 11.42, 14.53–54, 15.58, 17.69; cf. Ghirshman 1976: 260; Bessonova 1983: 39; Boyce 1985b: 1003). Anahita therefore belongs to the circle of other celebrated bellicose goddesses, such as Allat, affiliated both with Derceto (J. Ferguson 1982: 16) and *Ourania* (Her. 1.131). In the third century AD a great Sasanian king, Ardashir I, after one of his most important victories, offered the severed heads of defeated enemies to Anahita (Chaumont 1965: 172; cf. Widengren 1965: 315). However, Ishtar-Astarte (Dhormé 1945: 69; Barrelet 1955; Frymer-Kensky 1992: 66; Flemberg 1994: 15–17), Anath (Bilde 1990: 159) and Aphrodite (above, 1.1.1.6) could also bestow military success. In fact, the fusion of sexuality and ferocity is widely manifest throughout human cultures (Frymer-Kensky 1992: 67–69; Flemberg 1994: 17).

The initial polyfunctionality of Anahita, coupled with numerous heterogeneous foreign infiltrations in her cult, enabled multiple identifications of the goddess. The Greeks called her Anaitis, usually associated with Artemis (Widengren 1965: 177; Raditsa 1983: 102; Chaumont 1985: 1007), but also with Aphrodite (Widengren 1965: 123; Chaumont 1965: 169), Athena (Chaumont 1965: 169; Frye 1983: 121), Magna Mater (Wikander 1946: 211), and even Hera (Chaumont 1965: 170; 1985: 1006), each association reflecting a facet in the personality of the Persian goddess.[44]

Thus, the merging of the traits of Anahita and Aphrodite-Astarta in Argimpasa was facilitated by the proximity of the cults (Rostovtzev 1913: 16), both functional and historical. Sometimes it is indeed impossible to determine whence a specific feature of Argimpasa originates: from the Iranian, Levantine or Greek realm.

The cult of Argimpasa, performed by the powerful eunuch priests from the most noble families, by the fourth century BC turned into a cult of the divine patron of the royal dynasty (Bessonova 1983: 40); this development is reflected mainly in iconographic evidence (below, 1.2.3.5). Anahita appeared in the *Avesta* (*Aban Yasht* 12.46,

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[44] For the hellenized cult of Anaitis see *GGR* 2 672–674.

13.50) as a patroness of heroes and legendary kings, grantor of sovereignty and glory. In post-Achaemenian Iran Anahita was intimately connected with kingship. The rock reliefs at Naqsh-i-Rustam and Taq-i-Bostan depict the investiture of the Sasanian kings by Anahita (Ghirshman 1962: fig. 218; Widengren 1965: 319; Bier 1985: figs. 38, 39; Chaumont 1985: 1008). On a number of objects of art from Central Asia Anahita is represented holding a flower or a pomegranate in one hand and an (investiture) crown in the other (Ivanitzkiy 1982). Thus, Anahita of Persia (Rostovtzev 1913: 14; Ghirshman 1976: 260; Lukonin 1977: 141; Colpe 1983: 846; Chaumont 1985: 1007), like Argimpasa of the Scythians, and Aphrodite *Ourania* of the Bosporan Kingdom, was worshipped as the divine patroness of the king, a giver of the royal power.

As to the relation between the three Scythian goddesses, their erstwhile association with distinct tribes (El'nitzkiy 1960: 48), though not impossible in theory (Bessonova 1983: 41), cannot be proved on the basis of the existing evidence. Tabiti-Hestia and Api-Ge are obviously much less anthropomorphized than Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*, who has clearly evolved as a powerful divine personality. The former look like *deae otiosae*, while the latter combines diverse functions (fertility, warfare, sovereignty, and sacredness) and plays a most prominent role in the society, notwithstanding her relatively recent origin.

1.2.2 *The Anguipede Goddess and the Scythian Genealogical Myth*

There are five main versions of this myth: two of them are recorded by Herodotus (4.5 and 8–10); additional versions are related by Valerius Flaccus (6.48–59) and Diodorus of Sicily (2.43); and one appears in the *Tabula Albana* (*IG* XIV 1293 A 93–96).

1. Herodotus refers to his first version only briefly, saying that he himself does not believe the story told by the Scythians (Her. 4.5):

> ἄνδρα γενέσθαι πρῶτον ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ ἐούσῃ ἐρήμῳ τῷ οὔνομα εἶναι Ταργιτάον· τοῦ δὲ Ταργιτάου τούτου τοὺς τοκέας λέγουσι εἶναι, ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ πιστὰ λέγοντες, λέγουσι δ' ὦν, Δία τε καὶ Βορυσθένεος τοῦ ποταμοῦ θυγατέρα.
>
> The first man that was born in this country, being then desert, was Targitaos. His parents, they say—for my part I do not believe the tale, but it is told—were Zeus and a daughter of the river Borysthenes. (Translation by A. D. Godley)

What exactly aroused Herodotus' suspicions remains not entirely clear. Perhaps it was Zeus' paternity, for in the other version he recounted, the progenitor of the Scythians was Heracles.

2. This second legend is narrated in detail (Her. 4.8–10). Heracles with Geryoneus' cattle arrived at the deserted Scythia. His mares disappeared while he was asleep; looking for them he arrived at a land named Hylaia (Woodland), and there in a cave he found a creature of double nature—half-maiden, half-viper (ἐνθαῦτα δὲ αὐτὸν εὑρεῖν ἐν ἄντρῳ μιξοπάρθενον τινά, ἔχιδναν διφυέα, τῆς τὰ μὲν ἄνω ἀπὸ τῶν γλουτῶν εἶναι γυναικός, τὰ δὲ ἔνερθε ὄφιος), who later revealed to the hero that she was the mistress of this country (χώρης γὰρ τῆσδε ἔχω τὸ κράτος αὐτή). This monster kept the horses and agreed to return them only if Heracles had intercourse with her. After she had born Heracles three sons, she set him free. The youngest, named Scythes, became the forefather and the first king of the Scythians.[45]

3. According to Valerius Flaccus, Scythians were descendants of Colaxes,[46] the son of Jupiter and Hora, a nymph with a semi-bestial body, living near the springs of Tibisis:

> *. . . ductorque Colaxes*
> *sanguis et ipse deum, Scythicis quem Iuppiter oris*
> *progenuit viridem Myracen Tibisenaque iuxta*
> *ostia, semifero (dignum si credere) captus*
> *corpore, nec nymphae geminos exhorruit angues . . .*
> *. . . insuper auratos collegerat ipse dracones,*
> *matris Horae specimen, linguisque adversus utrimque*
> *congruit et tereti serpens dat vulnera gemmae.*

---

[45] It has been suggested (Tolstov 1948: 294–295; Tolstoy 1966: 245–246; Rayevskiy 1985: 38–45) that this legend resembled a story about Rostam and Tahmina from the Iranian epos *Shah-nama* by Firdawsi, both in the general subject scheme and in the details: a hero arrives in a new country; when asleep, he is deprived of his horses; the mistress of the country announces to him her wish that he be the father of her child; the hero accepts; leaving the country and his partner, he gives her a token which is to be passed to his offspring. A comparison between the two narratives may provide additional proof of the faithful adherence of Herodotus to the Scythian sources, reflecting an ancient Iranian tradition.

Moreover, an Ossetian legend on the birth of the greatest hero, Batraz, makes him a son of another hero, Khamytz, by a daughter of a river god Don-bettyr, who wore a turtle's shell during daytime (Miller 1882: 200). Reptilian shape and provenance from a river god connect the two maidens (Kuz'mina 1976: 55).

[46] The youngest son of Targitaos, who was allowed to keep the celestial gold and thereafter reigned in Scythia, was named Colaxais (Her. 4.5).

> . . . and Colaxes its chief, himself too of the seed of gods, begotten by Jupiter in Scythian land by green Myrace and the mouths of Tibisis, enchanted, if the tale is worthy of belief, by a nymph's half-human body not afraid of her twin snakes . . . Thereon had he himself joined serpents of gold, in likeness of Hora his mother; from either hand did the snakes' tongues meet, darting wounds upon a shapely gem. (Translation by J. H. Mozley)

4. In Diodorus' (2.43) account, the first Scythian named Scythes, who was also the first king, was born by an earth-born viper-limbed maiden, impregnated by Zeus:

> Ὕστερον δὲ μυθολογοῦσι Σκύθαι παρ' αὐτοῖς γενέσθαι γηγενῆ παρθένον· ταύτην δ' ἔχειν τὰ μὲν ἄνω μέρη τοῦ σώματος μέχρι τῆς ζώνης γυναικεῖα, τὰ δὲ κατώτερα ἐχίδνης. ταύτῃ δὲ Δία μιγέντα γεννῆσαι παῖδα Σκύθην ὄνομα . . . τῶν δὲ ἀπογόνων τούτου τοῦ βασιλέως ἀδελφούς δύο γενέσθαι διαφόρους ἀρετῇ . . .
>
> At a later time, as the Scythians recount the myth, an earth-born maiden came into being among them; the upper parts of her body as far as her waist were those of a woman, but the lower parts were those of a viper (*echidna*). After she lay with Zeus, she bore a son whose name was Scythes . . . Among the descendants of this king there were two brothers who were distinguished for their valor. (Translation by C. H. Oldfather, modified)

5. In the version of the *Tabula Albana*, Heracles would unite with a daughter of another river-god, Araxes,[47] whose name was Echidna, only after he had overcome the father. The offspring of this union were the progenitors of Scythians:

> . . . ἐπὶ Σκυθίαν διαβὰς Ἀ[ρ]ά[ξ]η[ν] μάχαι ἐνίκασε· τᾶι δὲ θυγατρὶ αὐτοῦ συνγενόμενος Ἐχίδναι υἱοὺς Ἀγάθυρσον ἔθετο καὶ Σκύθαν.
>
> . . . having arrived in Scythia, [Heracles] defeated Araxes in a battle. By his daughter Echidna he begot sons, Agathyrsos and Scythes.

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[47] Several large rivers were designated by this name: the Araxes of Transcaucasia, the Volga, the Jaxartes, and the Araxes in Atropatene (Frye 1983: 95; Diakonoff 1985: 96; Vogelsang 1992: 183). Since the episode took place in Scythia, the alternatives are either the Volga or the Transcaucasian Araxes. Herodotus indeed called the Volga "Araxes" (4.11), however, later Greek authors called it Rha (Diakonoff 1985: 96). Strabo (11.4.2) applied the name Araxes to a tributary of the modern Kura, in Armenia. Thus, the Araxes of the *Tabula Albana* was presumably meant to be found in Transcaucasia.

Heracles of the second and the fifth versions is certainly not the Greek hero, but a Scythian deity equated with Heracles (Grakov 1950: 12). The only detail characterizing him as the Greek Heracles, driving Geryoneus' cattle, may be compared to the motif of cattle theft in the mythology of the Iranian peoples, reflected, for instance, in the legend about Mithra *bouklopos theos* (Widengren 1966: 446).[48]

Tolstoy (1966: 234) however observes that Herodotus pastes the Greek myth of Geryoneus onto an authentic Scythian myth. In fact, Greek tradition makes Heracles travel with Geryoneus' cattle on foot. Yet in this story he rides a chariot, ἅρμα (Her 4. 8), which in the opinion of several scholars clearly indicates that the protagonist of the original story was an indigenous personage. The association with Heracles was in all probability suggested to Herodotus by his Greek informants (he emphasizes that the story was related to him by Pontic Greeks, 4.8), since Heracles was associated with a local goddess elsewhere in the Northern Pontic area, primarily in Apaturum.[49]

In any case, Herodotus (4.59) lists the Scythian Heracles among the gods; there is no evidence of specific traits of a Greek-style hero, as opposed to a god, in his personality. Thus it is legitimate to refer to the Scythian Heracles as a god.[50]

This god appears under different names (Targitaos, Scythes) in the other versions of the genealogical myth as a son of Zeus. Hence Zeus Papaios, the great Sky Father (Widengren 1965: 159), either directly, or through his son, was considered the progenitor of Scythians, exactly as Idanthyrsos (4.127) declared.[51]

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[48] The first cattle raid, reconstructed from Indian, Iranian, Greek, Roman, German, Celtic, and Hittite mythological evidence, belongs perhaps to a common Indo-European heritage. This myth concerns a hero who loses his cattle to a monster, normally a serpent, which in Indo-Iranian tradition is closely associated with local non-Indo-European populations (Lincoln 1976; Mallory 1991: 137; Sick 1996; cf. Burkert 1979: 85).

[49] This does not imply that the Scythian protagonist of this story was not ascribed a cattle raid of his own, which may have reminded Herodotus of Geryoneus and may have given him the idea of combining the two myths.

[50] Blavatskiy (1964b: 2.17–18) compared the Scythian Heracles to the famous Thracian Hero, Ἥρως, who received abundant dedications and was obviously one of the most popular deities of Thrace.

[51] The doubling of father and son thus postulated (Boltenko 1960) may be as probable as the incest between the hero and his mother, Zeus' spouse, suggested by Rayevskiy (1977b: 49–52) in order to reconcile all the versions of the myth. If Diodorus was right and Scythians imagined themselves offspring of the Earth-goddess via her anguipede daughter, the ritual impregnation of the earth by the king's substitute (1.2.1.1) might contain incestuous motifs (Bessonova 1983: 68).

The mother preserves her main characteristics in all the versions. She is called a daughter either of a river-god or of the earth, and she dwells in a cave; she is thus manifestly chthonic. Her name, Hora, as reported by Valerius Flaccus, belongs also to the Greek goddesses of seasons and fertility.[52] They fed Hera's horses in the *Iliad* (8.432–435), which is reminiscent of the keeping of Heracles' horses by the heroine of the legend related by Herodotus (Shaub 1987a: 154). In all the versions but the first, she is a monstrous half-female, half-snake. Numerous representations of this creature, usually depicted with vegetation symbols, attest to the importance and popularity of this deity.

This character is almost unanimously identified with Api (Artamonov 1961: 66; Rayevskiy 1977b: 46–48; Bessonova 1983: 37) on two main grounds: firstly, in some versions Zeus is the partner of the snake-limbed monster, and Herodotus called Api his wife; and secondly, the name of Api-Ge, the goddess of earth, indicates her connection with the aquatic element, while the Scythian foremother was a daughter of a river-god.

This approach has to be revised. First of all, a daughter of a local river-god cannot be a cosmic primordial deity, the Mother Earth, equal to the Greek Ge. A god of a polygamic society, where kings were married to several women (Her 4.78), hardly had to be strictly monogamous. Zeus Papaios could easily have offspring by partners other than Api. Herodotus, a writer who knew very well who was the spouse of Zeus-Papaios, nevertheless does not call the Scythian foremother "Api," although in both his versions he relates details about her, and in the first one even mentions the name of her father. No wonder that in the three other sources she is described either as a "nymph with a semi-bestial body" (Valerius Flaccus), as Araxes' daughter (*Tabula Albana*), or an anguipede earth-born maiden (Diodorus). The latter implies that the monster was a daughter of the earth-goddess, probably by a river-god, hence both chthonic and connected

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The Scythian ethnogenic myth may be compared to the Thracian, which probably also contained incestuous elements, such as a union between the hero-son and the goddess-daughter of the Great Goddess (Fol and Marazov 1977: 40–44). An illustration of such a story might be the hierogamy scene from the Letnitsa treasure, which shows the physical union of the hero and a goddess, with another goddess standing beside them, a branch in her hand symbolizing her nature (Fol and Marazov 1977: 38).

[52] The three Horai accompany Dionysos on the François vase.

with water, yet clearly not identical with Api-Ge. She belongs to a younger generation of deities of "lower status" (Bessonova 1983: 55), who were nevertheless much more actively involved in human life. In fact, quasi-romantic stories told about the anguipede goddess define a personality that is far from being cosmic and universal, as that of Ge.

These genealogical legends may be compared with the myth about Bosporan Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* and Heracles (above, 1.1.1.4). Even if not identical, these stories are certainly rather similar. In fact, the semi-viper monster who kept the horses of Heracles lived in Hylaia (Her. 4.9), where the orgiastic ceremonies in honor of a fertility goddess, that proved to be fatal for Anacharsis, were celebrated (Her. 4.76). More striking is the resemblance between the anguipede goddess and Derceto-Atargatis: monstrous body, fertility and vegetation symbolism, legends about her love-affair, and affiliation with Aphrodite *Ourania.*[53]

There is an additional link between the anguipede goddess and Derceto: Leucothea, who had a sanctuary in Colchis. Phrixos founded there an oracle, together with a sanctuary of Leucothea (Strabo 11.2.17), "a goddess in the sea" (Homer. *Od.* 5.335; cf. van Esbroeck 1990: 2790). This sanctuary has been identified with the cultic center at Vani, in the middle flow of the Phasis, modern Rioni (Lordkipanidze 1972; van Esbroeck 1990: 2719). Columns of the Vani temples were crowned with capitals featuring female protomes emerging from acanthus leaves (plate 5: 3; *DGKSA* pl. 23). This image is semantically close to the snake- or tendril-limbed goddess, whose representations were found on the Northern Black Sea littoral and in the Mediterranean region (below, 1.2.3.1–2). A fourth-century BC Greek inscription αρ ω ανασα, which is complemented as ἀρ(άομαι) ὦ ἄνασ(σ)α, was also discovered in Vani (*DGKSA* 55), showing that the deity (or at least one of the deities) honored there was a mighty goddess. An anonymous θεὸς Φασιανή was worshipped in Phasis (Arr. *Peripl.* 11; cf. Rostovtzeff 1919b: 465), a Greek town located near the mouth of the river Phasis.

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[53] El'nitzkiy (1970: 65) even supposed an etymological proximity between the names of the goddess Atargatis and the Scythian forefather Targitaos, the Scythian being, in his opinion, the male double of the goddess. However, the name Targitaos, as well as the name of the legendary Maeotian princess Tirgatao (Polyaen. 8.55), are firmly rooted in the local Iranian languages (Abayev 1949: 185).

Leucothea was honored throughout the Mediterranean world (Laumonier 1958: 672; Burkert 1983: 179; 1985: 172).[54] According to a myth (Apollod. 3.4.4), Leucothea had once been a mortal woman, Ino, Dionysos' nurse; driven mad by Hera, she threw herself into the sea, and turned into a goddess named Leucothea (cf. Paus. 1.44.7–8; Burkert 1983: 178).[55] On the one hand, this motif connects Leucothea, the Aegean mistress of the sea-creatures and the patroness of fishermen and sailors, to Derceto-Atargatis (Burkert 1985: 172).[56] On the other hand, a version of the genealogical legend, that of *Tabula Albana*, makes the anguipede Scythian foremother a daughter of the Caucasian river Araxes, thus placing the whole story outside Scythia, but near Colchis, where Leucothea was venerated. Given the background of a long history of interaction between the peoples of the Caucasus and the South Russian steppes, it is quite possible that the Colchian cult of Leucothea influenced the emergence of the image of the anguipede goddess.

In summary, the literary evidence does not exclude a relation of the Scythian chthonic and aquatic goddess to Api-Ge, but it is improbable that these two are identical. On the contrary, the snake-limbed foremother of the Scythians is very much akin to Derceto-Atargatis, both of them connected with Aphrodite *Ourania*, and also other mermaids, such as Leucothea.

1.2.3 *Iconography*

Treatment of Scythian art in all its complexity is beyond the scope of the present chapter. The following brief survey of the anthropomorphic representations of the Scythian goddesses intends to examine the religious and mythological tradition underlying these images, and to determine the nature of this major component in the evolution of the most important images in the Bosporan art.

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[54] And was intimately connected with Astarte (Bonnet 1996: 42, 124).

[55] The duality of Leucothea is conveyed also in her cult: in Aelea it combined sacrifices and mourning (*VS* fr. 21 A 13), and on Delos involved Dionysiac *phallagogia* (Burkert 1983: 71). The same idea is implied by the alternative names of Leucothea, Hemithea (Paus. 10.14.1–4; Phot. s.v. Τενέδιος ἄνθρωπος; Suida s.v. Τενέδιος ἄνθρωπος; Diod. 5.62, 5.83) and Amphithea (Hecataios *apud* Steph. Byz., s.v. Τένεδος). For a discussion of myths about Leucothea (Amphithea, Hemithea) see Cook 1914–40, 2: 668–673.

[56] Leucothea indeed assimilated to Atargatis in the Hermon area; in Tyre she was identified with Astarte (Bonnet 1996: 42).

1.2.3.1 *The Anguipede Goddess*

There can be no doubt that the entire series of Scythian objects of art, mainly from the fourth century BC, usually executed by Greeks for the Scythian market, represents the anguipede goddess of the genealogical myth (Rostovtzeff 1922: 107; Pyatysheva 1947; Ivanova 1951a; Rayevskiy 1977b: 52–53; Bessonova 1983: 93–98).[57] However, the term "anguipede goddess" is applied to several iconographic types (Ivanova 1951a; Petrov and Makarevich 1963; Bessonova 1983: 93), whereas only one of them depicts the snake-limbed monster proper.

The gold pendants from the Kul'-Oba tumulus (plate 6: 2) portrays a goddess with snake-shaped legs, griffins' heads growing below her waist, and lions' heads rising from her shoulders; she has small wings, wears a calathus, and holds a severed bearded head in her hand. The snakes and griffins characterize this goddess as *Potnia theron*, and links her with Medusa or Echidna. The gold diadem of the royal lady, buried in the same tumulus, features winged female torsos with tendril-shaped legs.

The snake-limbed goddess is shown winged on pendants from two indigenous sites, located in the area of Asiatic Bosporus: the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus (plate 6: 5) and the Ust'-Labinskaya group of settlements (Bessonova 1983: 93). In a Hellenistic Chersonesus vault, a similar pendant was discovered together with pendants featuring a severed head (Pyatysheva 1971: 102). A kit of horse head plates from the Tzymbalova Mogila tumulus[58] (plate 6: 1, 6) contains a fore-piece representing a goddess with snake-shaped legs, griffins' heads and vegetal tendrils beneath her legs and tendrils above the calathus, phalerae featuring heads of Medusa and Sileni, and fish-shaped side pieces. Fish-shaped side-pieces and fore-pieces were found in a number of Scythian tumuli (Rostovtzev 1913: 45).[59] Fish are certainly reminiscent of Derceto, although these side-pieces may also have served as amulets intended to quench the horse's thirst (Rostovtzev 1913: 46; Shaub 1987a: 151). Thus, the snake-limbed goddess appears also as a patroness of horses. Actually, the love affair with the anguipede maiden, imposed on Heracles, began after the monster had kept his mares (Her. 4.9).

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[57] Rostovtzev (1922: 108) thinks that they reproduce an Ionian iconographic type of Medusa, which is partially correct, since similar representations were in fact common in Ionia (below, 1.2.3.4). This iconographic type could have emerged under the influence of the Greek artisans working for the Scythian market. Moreover, the notion of a fertility-vegetation monstrous female deity (Christou 1968: 147) was actually very close to the image of the anguipede goddess in Scythian art.

[58] Otherwise Bol'shaya Tzymbalka. An analogous kit was discovered in the Tolstaya Mogila tumulus.

The combination of chthonic and vegetal symbolism in the Tzymbalka fore-piece is particularly significant because it links this iconographic group with another, of goddesses with tendril-shaped legs. To this group belongs a series of representations of a winged female figure wearing a calathus, with tendril-shaped legs, often surrounded with rich vegetal ornamentation (plate 6: 5), usually discovered in burials (Bessonova 1983: 94). It seems that the scepter head (plate 6: 4) from the fourth-century BC Alexandropol'skiy tumulus also belongs to this type (Artamonov 1961: 69; Onayko 1976: 176). Sometimes the standard type of the tendril-limbed goddess evolved into a new pattern, of a still less anthropomorphic monster, as for instance on the earrings from the Butory tumulus (*SSSV* pl. 42:23) or on the plate from the Gaymanova Mogila tumulus (Bessonova 1983: 94, fig. 21).

Depictions of the goddess with tendril-shaped legs, semantically equivalent to the snake-limbed goddess,[60] became predominant in the first centuries AD. This motif penetrated the art of the Bosporan Greek cities and turned into a most common designs on sarcophagi; it also appeared in architectural decoration (below, 1.3.2.5). Representations of the anguipede goddess were discovered also in Chersonesus, mostly in graves (plate 5.2; Pyatysheva 1947: 214).[61] The image of the tendril-limbed goddess continued to appear in Scythian art as well: many small schematic tendril-legged figures, accompanied by figures with radiate heads, are painted on the walls of vault No. 1 (second–third centuries AD) in Neapolis Scythica[62] (Vysotskaya 1976: 56; 1979: 161; 1983: 23; Popova 1987).

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[59] A gold shield ornament in the form of a huge fish was discovered in a burial of a Scythian aristocrat near Vettersfelde (Minns 1913: 236–238; fig. 146). The magnificent fish is covered with representations of various animals. Two fish, feline predators, a deer and a boar decorate a gold dagger sheath, unearthed from the same burial (Minns 1913: fig. 147).

[60] The opposition animal/vegetation goddess, inferred by Petrov and Makarevitch (1963), seems artificial and not warranted by the evidence, which attests to a merging of vegetation and animal symbolism.

[61] Pyatysheva (1947) interpreted the monster on the Chersonesus plaque as possessing the head of a cow, but the relief is too eroded to allow certainty on this point.

Representations of the snake-limbed goddess were found not only all over the Crimea, but also on the Asiatic side of the Bosporus, in the Sindo-Maeotian area, which demonstrates that this image was meaningful to Sindo-Maeotians as well as to Scythians. This observation further implies a proximity of religious conceptions of the Iranian tribes in the Black Sea area, or at least similarity in this particular cult, which warrants cautious application of the evidence concerning the worship of the goddess by the Scythians to the study of the Sindo-Maeotian cults, and vice versa.

The general shape of these representations is reminiscent of the symbol of the *ficus mundi* (Bessonova 1983: 95), the Tree of Life, which links the lower and the upper spheres of the Universe, but also symbolizes the supreme life-giving power, and thus merges with the image of the fertility goddess (Przyluski 1950: 94; 148; Burkert 1985: 86). In Iranians beliefs, the most primitive myth of creation of plants concerns a fabulous Saena tree, standing in the middle of a mythical sea. The Tree of All Remedies bears the seed of all plants and healing herbs; the sacred bird Saena has on its summit his resting place and scatters the seeds over the earth (*Rashn Yasht* 17, Yarshater 1983: 346, 352). The Tree of Life is also one of the basic notions in shamanic religions; anthropological evidence demonstrates that scepters indispensable in shamanic usage are considered representation of *ficus mundi* (Furst 1987: 219; Eliade 1987: 204–205; Siikala 1987: 211).

It is very significant that the image of the goddess crowned one of the scepters from the Alexandropol'skiy tumulus (plate 6: 4). In this tumulus, additional scepter heads were discovered, some of them furnished with bells, others decorated with schematic trees with birds sitting on them (Trees of Life), etc.[63] (Perevodchikova and Rayevskiy 1981). The snake-limbed goddess is therefore semantically very close to the Tree of Life, and her image was used in shamanic rites. This association appears natural, since the anguipede goddess was affiliated with, and probably almost identical to Argimpasa-Aphrodite, who played a prominent role in Scythian shamanic rituals.

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[62] To this period belong a number of Greek mirrors, terracottas, etc., representing Greek Aphrodite, and even a jug with a Greek dedication to her, which were discovered at Scythian sites (Vysotskaya 1979: 161–163).

[63] The Alexandropol'skiy tumulus is probably the tomb of a shaman (*SSSV* 121).

In the art of Scythia and Luristan, the goddess usually clutches with her both hands vegetal tendrils and animal heads that grow from her body, often from beneath its lower part (Godard 1931: pl. 52). The typical posture of the anguipede goddess with her hands and legs spread wide, the so-called "birth-giving attitude," is already known at Çatal Hüyük, where a majestically enthroned goddess, flanked by two felines, was represented actually giving birth to a child (Mellaart 1975: fig. 54). In fact, some Luristan pinheads clearly show a human head emerging from between the pulled-apart legs of a woman, who is surrounded by rosettes and two gazelles (Godard 1962: fig. 78, Ghirshman 1954: pl. 8a; 1964: ill. 58). In Ghirshman's view (1964: 48), these pinheads portray the Mother-goddess, the symbol of fecundity (Ghirshman 1954: 103; 1964: 46). The Scythian anguipede goddess is associated not only with vegetation, but with a general life-giving principle (Rayevskiy 1977b: 55; Bessonova 1983: 96). Feline predators appearing near the goddess in Scythian and Luristan art (Godard 1931: pl. 36; Ghirshman 1964: 46) make the vegetation goddess of the *ficus mundi* also *Potnia theron* (Machinskiy 1978: 135–137). This complex image reflects the amalgamation of three major fertility principles—of human motherhood, of vegetation, and of animal life.

As the vegetation deities are usually chthonic, the tendril-limbed goddess must have possessed chthonic features (Bessonova 1983: 97), which may be one of the reasons for placing her representations in tombs. She is also the foremother of the Scythians, and hence her cult must be connected with ancestor cult. Controlling the continuity of the life cycle, this deity might also be the giver of eternal life for individuals.

As to the severed head held by the goddess on the Kul'-Oba and Chersonesus pendants, it may signify the sacrificial offering of a man, hanging on the Tree of Life (Bessonova 1983: 98). In fact, the severed human head appears in the Near Eastern ecstatic cults of female deities: the great life-giving goddess demands death, re-enacting the death of her partner, whom she loves, emasculates, and kills (Burkert 1983: 81). The battle of the Greeks and the Amazons, depicted on a number of articles from the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus (above, 1.1.2.2), presumably conveys the androgynic blood-thirsty aspect of the goddess, whose wild female warriors enjoyed killing male Greeks.

Human sacrifices to local goddesses, accompanied by exposure of the severed heads of the victims, are attested on the Northern Black Sea coast.[64] It might be knowledge of the cruel rites performed in Tauris that encouraged Euripides to link the origins of the savage Artemis *Tauropolos* with this area (Bonnechere 1994: 49); in fact, Herodotus was acquainted with the local cult of the severed human head and human sacrifices for the Taurian Parthenos, probably another incarnation of the anguipede goddess (Rostovtzev 1918: 125; Pyatysheva 1947):[65]

> Τούτων Ταῦροι μὲν νόμοισι τοιοῖσιδε χρέωνται· θύουσι μὲν τῇ Παρθένῳ τούς τε ναυηγοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἄν λάβωσι Ἑλλήνων ἐπαναχθέντες τρόπῳ τοιῷδε· καταρξάμενοι ῥοπάλῳ παίουσι τὴν κεφαλήν. οἳ μὲν δὴ λέγουσι ὡς τὸ σῶμα ἀπὸ τοῦ κρημνοῦ ὠθέουσι κάτω (ἐπὶ γὰρ κρημνοῦ ἵδρυται τὸ ἱρόν), τὴν δὲ κεφαλὴν ἀνασταυροῦσι· οἳ δὲ κατὰ μὲν τὴν κεφαλὴν ὁμολογέουσι, τὸ μέντοι σῶμα οὐκ ὠθέεσθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ κρημνοῦ λέγουσι ἀλλὰ γῇ κρύπτεσθαι. (Her. 4.103; cf. Paus. 1.43.1; Amm. Marc. *Res gestae* 22.33).
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> Among these, the Tauri have the following customs: all ship-wrecked men, and any Greeks whom they take in their sea-raiding, they sacrifice to the Virgin in the following way: after the first rites of the sacrifice, they smite the victim on the head with the club; according to some, they then throw down the body from the cliff whereupon their temple stands, and place the head on the pole; others agree with this as to the head, but say that the body is buried in the earth, not thrown from the cliff. (Translation by A. D. Godley, slightly modified)

Herodotus (4.64) reports that Scythian warriors bring the heads of all the enemies they have killed in battle to their kings, as only those who provide heads receive a share of the booty. A scene which may serve as an illustration of this custom is represented on a Scythian rhyton from the Louvre (Frel 1964), which features a group of warriors, one of them observing a cut-off human head laid on the earth in front of him. Warriors holding severed human heads are shown on a gold cap from the Kurdzhips tumulus[66] (Minns 1913: fig. 126; Bulava 1987) and on the gold ornament from the Zubov tumulus (Ghirshman 1962: fig. 255); the Maykop fibula features a figure brandishing a human head (Ghirshman 1962: fig. 353). On the Karagodeouashkh rhyton (plate 27, below, 2.4.2.2) the prostrate bodies, trampled by the horse of a victorious king, are decapitated.

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[64] Cf. men's and horses' heads behind the horsemen on some articles from the Thracian Letnitsa treasure (Fol and Marazov 1977: 25, figs. on pp. 34–35). Livius (42.60) mentioned that Thracians used to carry home heads of enemies killed in battle.

Strabo (11.14.14) relates stories told of a Thracian tribe of Saraparae, and translates this name as "decapitators" (κεφαλοτόμους), i.e. those who behead their enemies. Since however Strabo places this fierce people beyond Armenia, its Thracian provenance seems doubtful.

[65] For the cult of Parthenos, the tutelary goddess of Chersonesus, and her relation to the Taurian goddess, see Latyshev 1909; Tolstoy 1917; Pyatysheva 1947; Belov 1948: 32; Ivanova 1954: 258; Artamonov 1961: 71–72; Blavatskiy 1964b, 2: 20; Solomonik 1973b: 76; Machinskiy 1978: 136; Shaub 1987a: 170; for the opposite view, that Parthenos was identical with the Greek Artemis: Minns 1913: 543; Meshcheryakov 1979.

Severed human heads are not only depicted on the objects of art. Their cult is attested archaeologically. Such a head, placed on an altar, was discovered close to a representation of a vegetation goddess in the semi-Sarmatian fortress of Iluratum (below, 1.3.2.8). Hence, this cruel ritual was common to the Iranian tribes of the South Russian steppes. Very tempting is the suggestion of Shelov (1950: 64–69),[67] that numerous pendants representing satyr heads (Shelov 1950: fig. 18: 2–4) found in the same complexes with the depictions of the snake-limbed goddess and Scythian Aphrodite, are associated with the cult of decapitation.[68]

1.2.3.2 *The Snake- or Tendril-Limbed Goddess Outside South Russia*

Nowhere was the image of the anguipede or semantically almost equivalent tendril-limbed fertility goddess as popular as in South Russia; nevertheless, it was not confined to this area.[69] After South Russia, fourth-century BC depictions of snake- or tendril-limbed goddess have been found most commonly in northern Greece (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 5). The image of this goddess decorated a number of objects of art found in Olynthos (to be discussed below in this section). In Macedonia female half-figures wearing calathi and foliate skirts appear on the mosaics in the royal palace at Aigai (modern Vergina; Andronikos 1984: figs. 19–20; cf. Touratsoglou 1983: 174).[70] A winged tendril-limbed goddess wearing a calathus was represented on the gables of fourth-century BC tombstones, also discovered in Vergina (Andronikos 1983: pl. 61).[71] There, as in South Russia, this deity belonged to the underworld.[72]

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[66] Y. A. Vinogradov (1993: 69) related this subject, together with the representation of dead bodies with their heads cut off on the largest of the Karagodeouashkh rhyta (plate 27), to male warrior cults. However, warrior societies worshipped fertility goddesses, as well (Burkert 1985: 17); therefore Bulava's idea, that the scene on the Kurdzhips cap might be associated with the Aphrodite *Apatouros* cult, is not as improbable as it seemed to Shaub (1987a: 168).

[67] Accepted by Bessonova (1983: 98) and Rayevskiy (1985: 173–175).

[68] Noteworthy is the famous Kul'-Oba *phiale* (Minns 1913: fig. 99), featuring alternating heads of Sileni and Medusae, as well as fish and feline predators. On the association of Medusa with the anguipede goddess see below, 1.2.3.4.

[69] Möbius (1968: 717) argued that the tendril-limbed figure served simply as a decorative design outside South Russia, where alone it had a certain religious meaning. This approach is untenable: the motif surely has deep religious roots (Curtius 1958: 200). Representations of the tendril-limbed goddess have been discovered in funerary contexts throughout the Mediterranean too often to deny their obvious connections with the ideology of the afterlife (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 5).

In Thrace, caryatids decorating the burial chamber in an early third century monumental tomb at Sveshtari have normal human bodies, but wear chitons with apoptygma shaped as floral volutes, an acanthus leaf between them. The caryatyds' hands either hold these volutes, or are raised, as if supporting the entablature (Fol et al. 1986: passim, esp. figs. 29–30).[73] These goddesses wearing calathi and floral dress appears to be a local interpretation of the image of the tendril-limbed goddess (Fol et al. 1986: 116). Their raised hands, which look disproportionally large, are reminiscent of a series of Thracian votive plaques showing a fertility goddess with her hands raised to her face (*EC* Nos. 6: 1–14; figs. 81–85). Corner consoles in this chamber bear images of eagles (Fol et al. 1986: 60, figs. 42, 44). A wall-painting in the lunette above the caryatids shows a goddess standing on a pedestal, a crown in her hand, reaching out towards an approaching horseman. The scene evidently represents the posthumous heroization of a noble Thracian (Fol et al. 1986: 117). Thus, the decoration of the Sveshtari tomb unites all the major elements of the complex Great Goddess-minor (semi-bestial or vegetation) goddess.

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[70] Pilaster-capitals from Perinthos feature three-quarter female figures rising from acanthus leaves (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 31).

[71] Curious is a fourth-century BC tombstone of Philippos son of Phoryscos, of Pallene (Curtius 1958: 197–198). The stele features a standard farewell scene, but is decorated with a unique acroterium, which shows an anguipede goddess almost identical to the Macedonian examples. From which Pallene did the deceased originate, the Attic deme or the westernmost peninsular of the Chalcidice? Hundreds of similar Attic stele lack any depictions of deities, and the anguipede goddess was certainly popular in Chalcidice, as the Olynthos evidence demonstrates. Northern descent of Philippos seems plausible.

[72] Was this goddess somehow connected with Zeirene, the Macedonian Aphrodite? (Hesych., s.v. Ζειρήνη· Ἀφροδίτη ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ). There are only indirect hints in favor of this suggestion.

Besides the image of the tendril-limbed goddess, fourth-century cultures of South Russia and Northern Balkans reveal numerous common features; see Mantzevich 1980: 166.

[73] I owe the reference to this monument to the kindness of Rivka Gersht.

In the late fifth century BC female protomes, emerging from a scroll ornament, were painted on Attic vases (Möbius 1968).[74] Worth noting are two lekythoi with a similar design: a female helmeted head between branches, with a pomegranate in front of it (Möbius 1968: 716). Möbius defines the deity as Athena conceived as a fertility goddess, which seems quite uncommon. Was not the goddess rather war-like Aphrodite or one of her counterparts? A Hellenistic relief fragment from the Acropolis shows a foliate-skirted goddess, with a small lion hiding beneath the foliage (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 7), hinting that the goddess was conceived as Cybele or simply as *Potnia theron.*[75]

A late fourth-century BC capital featuring a snake-limbed goddess wearing a polos was discovered in Salamis on Cyprus (Curtius 1958: 195, fig. 28; Möbius 1968: 717), one of the centers of the Aphrodite-Astarte cult. A goddess with legs shaped as vegetal tendrils appeared in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor in the strongholds of the Great Goddess. An acroterium of the temple of Artemis *Leucophryene* in Magnesia (second–first centuries BC) is shaped as a winged female torso wearing a calathus, emerging above acanthus leaves (Humann, Kohte and Watzinger 1904: 67, 69, figs. 57, 60; cf. Laumonier 1958: 532). The same design decorated the frieze in the cella of the Artemision (Humann, Kohte, and Watzinger 1904: 75, 77, figs. 65, 69) and the capitals of the temple of Zeus *Sosipolis* (Humann, Kohte, and Watzinger 1904: 147, fig. 158), closely associated with Artemis *Leucophryene* (Laumonier 1958: 535). In Didyma the same image appeared on the frieze inside the temple of Apollo (Wiegand 1941: pls. 107–109).[76] Later, at Aphrodisias the foliate-skirted goddess clutching stems of acanthus was portrayed on pilaster capitals of the main entrance to the Hadrianic baths (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950:

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[74] Möbius (1968: 717) interprets the female figure emerging from a scroll ornament, painted on a fifth-century BC lekythos, as a "fancy creation of the author," since it has no attributes of a divinity. Is not the fantastic shape sufficient to prove that the image on the vase was conceived as a supernatural being, and not just as a mortal?

[75] The lion was not intended just to "enliven the scene," as Toynbee and Ward Perkins claim (1950: 7).

[76] Laumonier (1958: 566, 577) supposed that these creatures, associated with Artemis, the protectress of vegetation, together with Medusae and griffins, were intended to create the sensation of "a mystic Aegeo-Oriental paradise."

31). Female figures emerging from the acanthus leaves decorated the propylaea of Aphrodite's temenos (Laumonier 1958: 482; pl. 10).[77]

Evidence from Ephesos clearly demonstrates that in Roman Asia Minor the motif of a snake- or tendril-limbed goddess was not just a baroque decoration, but retained its cultic significance. Nude tendril-limbed figures alternate with bees on the dress of the Ephesian goddess herself, on the statues of the so-called Artemis the Colossal (first century AD) and Artemis the Beautiful (second century AD). A foliate-skirted female figure clutching floral stems crowns the entrance to Hadrian's temple; winged creatures with snake-shaped or tendril-shaped legs appear on two relief depictions of tripods. A lintel of one of the agora gates features a goddess with floral tendrils growing from her shoulders, with small Erotes playing between the leaves (Curtius 1958: fig. 37).

A winged goddess emerging from acanthus leaves was represented in the Pergamon Trajaneum (Humann, Kohte, and Watzinger 1904: 71, fig. 62). Nude female three-quarter-length figures are portrayed emerging from acanthus leaves and clutching leafy boughs on the main gable of the *scenae frons* at Aspendus (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 31).

In the Near East, winged female figures rising from the foliage decorate one of the pediments in Baalbek (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 31). In Khirbet et-Tannur (Transjordan) in the temple of the fish-goddess Atargatis, the goddess was shown emerging from a floral scroll, with leaves sprouting from her face and neck (Glueck 1937: pls. 14, 15). A Hellenistic cast of a helmet, featuring a tendril-limbed winged goddess, was found in Memphis, Egypt (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 4–5).

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[77] In Laumonier' opinion (1958: 496–497), this image resembles that of a woman emerging from the branches of a tree, represented on the coins of Myra in Lycia, the city where Artemis *Eleuthera* was venerated (Laumonier 1958: 496, pl. 12: 19; Cook 1914–40, 2: fig. 620). In fact, one of the *epikleseis* of Aphrodite in Aphrodisias was *Eleutheria* (Laumonier 1958: 493). On the coins of Myra the tree, flanked by two snakes, is attacked by two men with double axes. The same scene is depicted on some coins of Aphrodisias (Laumonier 1958: pl. 12: 18, 20, 21; Cook 1914–40, 2: figs. 621, 622), with the only difference that there no human figure emerges from the leafless branches of the tree. It was suggested (Cook 1914–40, 2: fig. 680) that these coins be viewed as illustrating the myth of the birth of Adonis by Myrrha. Myrrha, who brought upon herself the anger of Aphrodite, was punished by the goddess. She fell in love with her own father and consorted with him. When he learned what happened, he pursued her, sword in his hand; Myrrha, who was turned into a myrrh-tree by the gods, subsequently gave birth to Adonis, who later became Aphrodite's lover (Apollod. 3.14.4; Ovid. *Met.* 10.490). It is significant that this myth to a certain point duplicates the legend of Derceto, told in Ascalon: Aphrodite' s wrath—ultimate shame of the girl who had provoked it—her pregnancy and the birth of the child—her metamorphosis. Thus, it seems that in Asia Minor and in the Near East the Great Goddess (Aphrodite or Artemis) was affiliated with a minor goddess, thought of in a monstrous (semi-bestial or vegetal) form.

In late-Republican and Imperial times the motif of a tendril-limbed goddess appeared in Italy in paintings, stucco, terracotta, and sculpture, including sarcophagi (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 7; Curtius 1958: 198–201, 205, figs. 29, 36, 43). It was very popular in the art of Pompeii and Herculanum (Curtius 1958: 209). Italians were well aware of the symbolism of the motif, which they knew due to the long local iconographic tradition, and not only as a result of contacts with the eastern Mediterranean in Imperial times. In fact, the image of the tendril-limbed goddess first appeared much earlier, in the seventh or sixth century BC, on two gold plaques from Cerveteri (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 5). Snake-limbed and tendril-limbed winged creatures appear also on fourth-century BC vases from southern Italy (Möbius 1968: 717; Trendall 1989: fig. 255; Schmidt 1996: 452, cat. No. 328). Objects from southern Italy feature human heads or three-quarter-length figures, combined with volutes and acanthus-foliage, and in many instances accompanied by Erotes (Trendall 1989: figs. 141, 179, 181, 182, 186–191, 209, 210, 238, 248, 257, 268).[78] They constitute a whole series, Tarentum being the center for all this work (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 6). In Italy, the chthonic symbolism of this goddess was conspicuous: on an amphora from Neapolis, featuring a Niobids-scene, Niobe is portrayed in a *naiskos*, its foundations decorated with a group of tendril-limbed winged figures, calathi on their heads (Curtius 1958: fig. 33). A tendril-limbed goddess flanked by two griffins is represented on a gold diadem from Italy (Curtius 1958: fig. 34).

Curtius (1958: 196) believed that *die Rankengöttin* was essentially the Oriental vegetation and fertility goddess, Artemis-Cybele, and that the image had emerged in the Orient, and from there spread over the Mediterranean. However, the northern origin of the image is suggested not only by the area of its earlier diffusion in the Greek world, but also by the fact that in northern Europe female creatures with snake-shaped legs were portrayed throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages (Gimbutas 1991: 132). They appear in early La Tène art in Germany (Gimbutas 1991: fig. 214; Duval 1977: 61, figs. 19, 48, late fifth–fourth century BC), as well as on the rock carvings and bronze objects from the Late Bronze Age Scandinavia, Denmark, and Germany (Gimbutas 1991: 132).[79] The firmly established role of the anguipede goddess as the foremother of the Scythians probably indicates that this image existed in their mythology before the period of intensive contacts with the Mediterranean world that brought in, or at least modified and intensified, the cult of Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*. An early first millennium BC electrum goblet from Luristan shows a two-headed monster with a woman's breasts, hands and hips, and reptile legs, clutching gazelles with both hands (Godard 1962: pl. 34). If this Iranian image influenced Greek iconography directly and was transmitted to Balkan Greece by the eastern Greeks, why did it take them more than half a millennium to reveal their interest on their own monuments? It is more likely that the Luristan monster is associated with the Scythian anguipede goddess, and that both belong to a common Iranian heritage.

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[78] On some vases Aphrodite escorted by two Erotes is portrayed seated or standing on a big flower.

Thus, one cannot exclude the possibility that Scythians, as well as at least some other Indo-Europeans, had initially worshipped snake-limbed goddesses, and that it was from the north that this image arrived to the Aegean, and later, to the Mediterranean. The Scythian iconographic style of representing this deity was certainly perfected by Greek artisans, but it could have existed earlier and have been affiliated with the Luristan tradition.

Winged tendril-limbed creatures, accompanied by griffins or panthers, were sometimes represented bearded (plate 7: 1–4): on two identical fourth-century BC marble thrones from Athens a winged deity with a calathus on the head, wearing female clothes, holds the ends of vegetal tendrils (plate 7: 3; Möbius 1926: 121; Kraus 1954). On a contemporary column base from Athens the deity has neither wings nor tendrils instead of legs, but the dress is again female, the headgear is a calathus, and the accompanying animals are winged unicorn panthers (plate 7: 2; Möbius 1926: 124).

Very interesting is a fourth-century BC marble acroteriumn of unknown origin, showing a tendril-limbed bearded deity wearing a high headdress topped with a palmetto, and holding unicorn panthers (or maybe lions) by their horns (plate 7: 4; Möbius 1926: 121). The acroterium, executed in marble that resembles the Pentelian, is conserved at present in the Hermitage, hence Möbius' (1926: 121) suggestion that it was found in South Russia, which Shaub (1987a: 111) regards as very likely. If so, it could have added an unknown aspect to the image of the Scythian tendril-limbed goddess, but unfortunately there is no way to establish the exact provenance of the piece.[80]

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[79] The image of half-maiden, half-snake (*Schlangenjungfrau, weiße Jungfrau*) living in a cave existed in German mediaeval folklore (Tolstoy 1966: 240–241, with references).

A calathus is normally worn by a goddess, not a god;[81] symmetrically arranged felines are depicted on either side of *Potnia theron*, the garments of the deity in all instances are undoubtedly female, and on the nude torso of the deity shown on the acroterium from the Hermitage one can detect breasts. Yet scholars regard this character as Dionysos (Langlotz 1932: 182), Sabazios (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 5; Kraus 1954: 43; Picard 1961: 135; Möbius 1968: 717; Shaub 1987a: 111),[82] as a "male fertility deity" (Ivanova 1954: 197), or as the Lord of the animals (Robinson 1941: 31; Bessonova 1983: 86). To be sure, Sabazios and Dionysos were never portrayed winged. The solution to the riddle is probably supplied by bronze reliefs from Olynthos (plate 7: 1; Robinson 1941: 31, pl. 5: 16; fig. 6), featuring a bearded winged deity, with an ornament emphasizing the breasts, a plant above the head, two panthers emerging from beneath the waist—almost the same design as on the Bol'shaya Tzymbalka plate (plate 6: 6)—and a bird between these panthers. If this bird is a dove, which is most likely,[83] the Olynthos reliefs represent the androgynous Astarte-Aphrodite. A pebble mosaic, discovered in Olynthos, shows a deity, clutching his or her tendril-shaped legs, and flanked by two double-bodied sphinxes (Robinson 1933: pl. 6A). Regrettably, the schematic design of the mosaic does not allow one to discern the sex of the character.

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[80] Much later, male foliate-skirted figures were shown resting their hands on the shoulders of the deceased on a Roman second-century AD tomb (Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1959: 5). Erotes with legs shaped as bunches of acanthus leaves appear on a relief from Trajan's forum (Curtius 1958: fig. 39).

[81] There are some rare exceptions, which are limited to Zeus, Hades, Sarapis, Dionysos, and Asclepius (Laumonier 1958: 337).

[82] For the criticism of this identification see Lane 1980: 21; Johnson 1984: 1595.

[83] It does not resemble an eagle, as Picard (1961: 135) argues: this bird, lacking an eagle's typical thighs and beak, cannot be a bird of prey. The posture of the bird, which is shown en face, with its wings spread, is certainly not typical of doves, but it nevertheless occurs in art, at least during later periods, e.g. on a mosaic of a fifth-century AD church in Transjordan (Donceel-Voûte 1988: fig. 338). I owe this reference to the kindness of Peter Fabian, to whom I am grateful for his permission to cite his as-yet unpublished excavations of a sixth-century AD church in Beer-Sheva (Palestine), where a mosaic representation of a pigeon holding an olive branch in its beak was discovered, the pigeon pictured en face, its wings spread. Swans were also shown in this posture: Delivorrias 1984: Nos. 131; 810.

The bearded Aphroditos is shown emerging from a scrotal sac on a seventh-century BC terracotta plaque from Perachora (Payne 1940: 231–232, pl. 102; cf. Burkert 1985: 155; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 123). Photius (s.v. 'Αφρόδιτος) explained that Aphroditos was Hermaphroditos, and cited fragments from Attic comedies mentioning this divinity. The bearded Aphrodite was worshipped on Cyprus (Paion, *FGH* 757 F 1) and celebrated in Athens in a transvestite rite (Macrob, *Saturn.* 3.8, *FGH* 328 F 184):

> *Nam et apud Calvum Aterianus adfirmat legendum "pollentemque deum Venerem", non deam. Signum etiam eius est Cypri barbatum corpore sed veste muliebri cum sceptro ac natura virili, et putant eandem marem ac feminam esse. Aristophanes eum Aphroditon appellat. Laevius etiam sic ait "Venerem igitur almum adorans, sive femina sive mas est, ita uti alma Noctiluca est". Philochorus quoque in Atthide eandem adfirmat esse Lunam et ei sacrificium facere viros cum veste muliebri, mulieres cum virili, quod eadem et mas aestimatur et femina.* (Macrob. *Sat.* 3.8.2–3)
>
> Indeed, Aterianus in Calvus maintains that it is to be said "the mighty god Venus," not goddess. Also on Cyprus there is his effigy, with bearded body but in female attire, holding a scepter, although of male nature, and [they] believe it to be both male and female. Aristophanes calls him Aphroditos. Laevius also said: "Thus, worshipping the benign [male] Venus, be it woman or man, as the Night Luminary is benign [female]." Moreover, Philochorus in *The History of Attica* affirmed that she was the Moon, and that when sacrificing to her, men wore female dress, and women male, since she was considered both man and woman.

The deity on the thrones and base from Athens, the acroterium from the Hermitage, and the Olynthos plaque is the androgynous Aphrodite. If the provenance of the Hermitage acroterium were secure, it could have served as an additional indication of the bisexual nature of the goddess in South Russia. In any way, it is extremely significant that the bearded androgynous Aphrodite-Astarte is shown on these mon-

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But even if the bird is a poorly pictured eagle, this does not imply that the deity is Sabazios: in the Sveshtari tomb eagles decorate the chamber of caryatids wearing floral dress, with the representation of a goddess above them. On a bronze plaque of Anatolian origin a goddess holding a spear in her hand and wearing a shining crown, presumably Ma, is flanked by two eagles (Seyrig 1970).

uments in a posture typical of the Black Sea anguipede goddess. This is a most striking utterance of the relationship between Aphrodite and the anguipede goddess, which is expressed in myth, ritual, and iconography.

Thus, in several areas, where the cult of the Great Goddess, bearing the name of Aphrodite, Artemis, Cybele, or any other, played a dominant role—in Asia Minor, the South Russian steppes, and the Near East (Ascalon)—the Goddess is accompanied by a minor deity, a semi-bestial monster, who is usually discernible from the Great Goddess, but sometimes approaches her so closely that the two images almost merge. The question whether this duality resulted from the split of a once-single cult, or from an incomplete absorption of a minor goddess by a more powerful divine personality, remains beyond the scope of the present study. The situation could also differ from place to place. Taking into consideration the adoption of some major features of Argimpasa from the Anatolian-Levantine goddesses, it seems reasonable that the duality of the great mistresses of Ascalon, Ephesos, Aphrodisias, etc., could have prompted the cultic, mythological, and iconographic affiliation of Argimpasa with the anguipede goddess in South Russia. Yet the sound mythological tradition demonstrates that in the South Russian steppes the anguipede goddess belonged to the local pantheon; in fact, she had been worshipped as the Scythian foremother long before artifacts with her representations began to be executed by Greek artisans for the Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian aristocracy.

1.2.3.3 *The Goddess with Raised Hands*

The goddess, sitting on two lions, with disproportionately large hands raised as if in prayer (*Orans*), is represented on so-called earrings (actually, temple pendants of head-gear) from three fourth-century BC tumuli: Mastyuginskiy,[84] Tolstaya Mogila, and Lyubimovskiy (plate 8: 3; Bessonova 1982). This goddess is usually identified as Cybele (Petrenko 1978: 31). Yet Cybele normally sits on a throne flanked by lions en face (Bessonova 1982: 25–26); on the "earrings" she is seated on the protomes of two lions, their heads in profile shown at her sides. The posture of the deity with raised hands existed in Iranian and Near Eastern art (Bessonova 1982: 27) and in Greek art since the Mycenaean period (Nilsson 1927: 308); later goddesses in *anodos* (Ge, Demeter) were sometimes depicted in this attitude (Nilsson 1927: 16; Bessonova 1982: 27). Nonetheless the Scythian type probably originated in Luristan and the Caucasus, where deities with enormous raised palms were shown flanked by animals (Bessonova 1982: 29). This posture is regarded as an utterance of a prayer, either to a solar or celestial deity (Bessonova 1982: 30). While on the Scythian "earrings" the huge palms are depicted schematically, later Bosporan goddesses in the same attitude have distinctly leaf- or branch-shaped palms (plate 16: 2; 22). The goddess on the "earrings" from the Tolstaya Mogila tumulus is half-nude: above the skirt she wears only a cross-belt, her breasts remaining uncovered. This nudity affiliates her with Aphrodite and the snake- or tendril-limbed goddess, frequently shown in topless dress (Bessonova 1982: 25). Semantically the goddess with leaf-shaped hands, sitting on two lions (or on a throne flanked by these beasts) is very close to the goddess with tendril-shaped legs, also with wild or fantastic animals on her sides, and to Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*.

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[84] In the middle reaches of the Don.

The same gesture is portrayed on the famous Chernomlyk plate (plate 8: 4), which was produced in a Bosporan workshop (Bessonova 1982: 31): a protome of a goddess emerging from a palmetto decorated with tendrils and rosettes, and touching her calathus with both raised hands. This character is akin to the tendril-limbed goddess.[85]

1.2.3.4 *The Winged Goddess*

The most ancient depictions of this image are on the famous mirror (Maximova 1954: fig. 1)[86] and rhyton (Maximova 1956: fig. 11) from the Kelermes tumulus in the Kuban area (late seventh century BC).[87] The circle of the mirror, divided into eight equal segments, with a rosette in the middle, represents the model of the Universe, semantically equal to the Tree of Life (Bessonova 1983: 83)[88] and probably implying some complex astronomical and astrological notions (Rayevskiy 1985: 100); the surface is covered with eight scenes, seven of them portraying fantastic demons, animals, and semi-bestial men, ostensibly dominated by a winged goddess holding two panthers in her widely spread hands. This is *Potnia theron*, who in the Kuban context was most likely associated with Argimpasa-Aphrodite (Gajdukevic 1971: 229; Onayko 1976: 176; Bessonova 1983: 86).[89]

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[85] Hence is certainly affiliated with Aphrodite, and not with Ge, as Bessonova (1982: 31) maintains. However, she identifies as Argimpasa-Aphrodite the goddess represented on the "earrings" (1983: 92).

[86] For the history of its discovery, bibliography, and a detailed description see Maximova 1954.

[87] This date is accepted by most scholars (Bessonova 1983: 81). Maximova (1954; 1956) dates the tumulus to the 70–80's of the sixth century BC.

[88] Cf. similar compositions of Luristan votive pins (Godard 1962: figs. 49, 92).

In Luristan, an androgynous deity of fertility was usually represented as a winged female creature, holding vanquished animals. This *Potnia theron* was sometimes shown as male (Ghirshman 1964: 46).

In the Orient, Inanna-Ishtar was sometimes portrayed winged, this detail highlighting her celestial and bellicose character (Barrelet 1955: 236); depicted as a winged nude goddess with two mirrors, flanked by two stars, she combines both astral symbolism and emphatic sexuality (Barrelet 1955: 243). This winged nude goddess was also conceived as *Potnia theron*, when shown holding animals in both hands (Barrelet 1955: 247–251), or surrounded by animals (Barrelet 1955: 252–256). Sometimes weapons clutched by the winged Mistress of animals emphasized her warlike character (Barrelet 1955: figs. 16a, 21b). This iconographic tradition affected Scythian culture both directly and via objects of the orientalizing Ionian Greek art.

The attitude of the goddess of the Kelermes mirror is common in early (seventh–sixth century BC) representations of Artemis (Kahil 1984: Nos. 626–628; Helck 1971: 224; cf. Paus. 5.19.5); Artemis was sometimes depicted as winged later (Kahil 1984: Nos. 617–619; 706–713), while Greek Aphrodite has never been portrayed with wings.[90] However, she could sometimes be conceived as winged, as the words χρυσόπτερη πάρθενε in the beginning of Stesichorus' *Palinodia* demonstrate (*Pap. Oxyr.* 29 fr. 26.1; cf. Helck 1971: 224).

Greek Aphrodite appeared with a train of wild animals in the Homeric hymn dedicated to her (68–74), and thus assumed traits of the Mistress of animals, the Great Mother (*GGR* 1 523; Burkert 1985: 154). Aphrodite was depicted flanked by sphinxes or lions (Delivorrias 1984: Nos. 90, 91, 93, 97, 374, 375), or accompanied by other animals (Delivorrias 1984: Nos. 116, 120) already in the late sixth–early fifth centuries BC. Notable is the so-called Cyprian Aphrodite-type: in late seventh–early sixth centuries BC the goddess was portrayed wearing a crown decorated with figurines of sphinxes and rosettes (Delivorrias 1984: 18–19, Nos. 108, 110). The syncretism of Aphrodite with the Anatolian Great Goddess Cybele-Artemis is especially conspicuous in the Carian city of Aphrodisias, where Aphrodite was depicted in the guise of Artemis *Ephesia* (Laumonier 1958: 486–500; pl. 11; Fleischer 1984: 151–154); some coins of the city show the goddess flanked by two griffins (Delivorrias 1984: No. 816). Therefore objects of art representing winged *Potnia theron*, such as the Kelermes mirror (Maximova 1954), which were produced by the Ionian Greeks for Scythian customers, could be perceived by their Greek creators as depicting the Great Goddess in one of her incarnations—Cybele, Artemis, or Aphrodite. As for the indigenous peoples inhabiting South Russia, they may have identified the winged goddess with their celestial *Potnia theron*, whom the Scythians named Argimpasa, and who was, in her turn, recognized as Aphrodite by the locals themselves.

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[89] Maximova (1954) identifies her as Cybele.

[90] But her Etruscan counterpart, Turan, sometimes appeared winged (Bloch 1984: No. 7). Eros' wings are, however, the best expression of the volatility inherent in Aphrodite's nature.

The winged running deity with small wings on the feet and griffins on both sides, portrayed on the rhyton from Kelermes,[91] resembles Medusa. Unfortunately, the rhyton is damaged, especially the upper part of the deity's image; thus, for instance, no snakes may be seen, but the general definition of the character as *Potnia theron* in the guise of Medusa[92] seems certain. A similar winged deity holding two animals was depicted on a gold plate from the Shakhan (Semikolenny) tumulus in the Kuban area (Bessonova 1983: fig. 9: 2). In fact, representations of Medusa were extremely popular in Scythia. Most of them were executed by Greeks, as for instance such masterpieces as a chalcedony gem from the Yuz-Oba tumulus (Minns 1913: fig. 318: 6) or a gold *phiale* from the Kul'-Oba tumulus, showing heads of Sileni and Medusae (Minns 1913: fig. 99; Rayevskiy 1985: 174–175). Numerous gold pendants in the form of Medusa's head trimmed the garments of noblemen buried in Scythian tumuli. The vogue for these Greek depictions of Medusa might have resulted from the Scythian identification of Medusa with their anguipede goddess (Rayevskiy 1985: 173; Shaub 1987a: 152–154).[93]

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[91] Bessonova (1983: 86) defines this deity as male, basing her opinion on the comparison of the Kelermes rhyton with the already discussed representations of the bearded character with panthers from Athens and Olynthos, whom she considered the Lord of the animals.

[92] Maximova (1956) identifies the goddess as Cybele. However, as already mentioned, these images often merged.

Probably winged was the goddess shown on a mid-seventh century BC bronze decoration of a cart beam from the site of Krasnoye Znamya (in the foothills of the Northern Caucasus), which was depicted in the Assyrian iconographic tradition and therefore identified as Ishtar by its publisher (Petrenko 1980). This image is one of the most ancient anthropomorphic representations known in Scythian art. However, this item was manufactured from an alloy chemically identical to that used for the rest of the harness and hence might have been produced in Scythia (Petrenko 1980: 18). Unfortunately the object was discovered rather damaged, so that it remains only a plausible guess that the goddess portrayed on it was winged (Bessonova 1983: 84). However, there is no doubt that she was represented inside a radiate circle, intended to convey her solar nature; this goddess is akin to Scythian Aphrodite and probably was conceived as such by those who put her representation into the burial (Rayevskiy 1985: 95).

A winged goddess flanked by deer is shown on a plate from the Alexandropol'skiy tumulus (*SSSV* pl. 34: 8), where a scepter head with a anguipede goddess was found (Onayko 1976: 167; Bessonova 1983: 88–89). The Alexandropol'skiy goddess is usually identified as Argimpasa-Aphrodite (Artamonov 1961: 68–89; Onayko 1976: 168; Bessonova 1983: 89).

A silver gilded phalera (plate 8: 1) of crude local work from the Sarmatian Yanchokrak treasure (second–first centuries BC) shows the winged goddess, her head decorated with leaves, with a dove, and holding a small round object in one hand and a rosette in the other (K. F. Smirnov 1984: 103–104).[94] The dove makes it certain that the goddess is Aphrodite. A series of other phalerae from the treasure, divided into four or eight segments, are reminiscent of the semantics of the Kelermes mirror.

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[93] Greek Medusa, like the Scythian anguipede goddess, was also patently connected with horses: the scene of Perseus and Medusa on the Boeotian pithos at the Louvre depicts her as having an equine body (Barnett 1960: 149). Medusa's decapitation gave birth to the horse Chrysaor; Medusa was also the mother of Pegasus. On the Anatolian origin of these myths, and on the parallelism between Medusa and Humbaba, see Barnett 1960.

[94] Very similar are two articles from Thrace: a bundle from the Galiche treasure, that in an unsophisticated local style portrays the Great Goddess en face, with two doves above her shoulders (Rostovtzev 1926: pl. 2; *EC* No. 6: 11, pl. 84); a

An accidental find of a phalera in the Kuban area shows that Greek iconography of Aphrodite was adopted by the Sarmatians. The phalera of crude barbaric work portrays Aphrodite as *Pandemos.* She rides a goat, which climbs a ladder leading to the starry sky. Above her are the sun and the moon. The goddess is accompanied by two Erotes and faces Hermes, who holds a caduceus (Desyatchikov 1973: 78). Sarmatians who copied a Greek representation of Aphrodite *Pandemos* certainly associated her image with a local goddess.

It is to be observed that the Yanchokrak Aphrodite, like the snake-limbed goddess from the Tzymbalova Mogila tumulus and the goddess from the Krasnoye Znamya tumulus, appears on the parts of the horse harness. Thus, Scythian *Potnia theron* was also *Potnia hippon* (Rostovtzev 1913: 46). To be sure, representations of a nude goddess, Inanna, Ishtar, or another, decorating articles of a horse harness, have been discovered in various places in the Near East, in Anatolia, and in the Aegean (Helck 1971: 226). The Iranian Anahita appears on a chariot, holding the reins (*Aban Yasht* 2.11), and wears a gold diadem, probably shaped as a chariot (*Aban Yasht* 30.128; cf. Kuz'mina 1977: 98).[95] These great goddesses were therefore also mistresses of

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metal appliqué shows her winged, but without doves (Fol and Marazov 1977: 122). It should be observed that the region north of the Danube was invaded in the late Hellenistic period by the Sarmatians, who influenced, at least to a certain extent, the local art (Fol and Marazov 1977: 125; Hoddinott 1981: 142). As to these two artifacts, they resemble the Sarmatian Yanchokrak phalera (Hoddinott 1981: 140), even in the details of the edge design.

A series of similar bronze plaques featuring a woman en face, wearing a regular or triple calathus, with either normal or disproportionally large hands raised to her face in a gesture which resembles that of the leaf-handed goddess, was discovered in Thrace in Abritus (modern Razgrad; *EC* 253–256, Nos. 6: 1–7, frontispiece and pls. 81–82). On some plaques the goddess is accompanied by solar symbols (crescent and sun (?), *EC* Nos. 6: 1 and 6); or by fish (*EC* No. 6: 2, pl. 81). An anonymous goddess with raised hands portrayed on a marble votive tablet (*EC* No. 6: 12, pl. 83) is addressed as ἐπήκοος καὶ ἀφοσίκακος (heedful and warding off evil). The goddess represented on these and other objects is identified as the Thracian great goddess Bendis, with Iranian (solar) and Semitic (aquatic) elements, adopted from Anahita and Atargatis (*EC* 262).

Rostovtzev (1926) suggested Iranian connections for the Galiche goddess, because this phalera was discovered together with another one, showing a horseman. This pair, in his opinion, recalls Scythian art objects, showing a goddess and a horseman. Rostovtzev's brilliant intuition finds an excellent confirmation in the Razgrad finds, where depictions of the goddess were deposited together with representations of a horseman holding a rhyton (*EC* 259).

[95] Anahita might have assumed the patronage over horses from Druwaspa, "She who possesses strong horses," the goddess who despite her name presided over livestock (Schwartz 1985: 671).

horses. Since in the Iranian world, and among the inhabitants of South Russia in particular, the horse is both emphatically solar and chthonic (Kuz'mina 1977a), the portrayal of Argimpasa-Aphrodite on the horse harness implies that this celestial goddess nevertheless retained her darker side of killer and earth deity .

The winged goddess, especially when portrayed as Medusa and flanked by wild or fantastic animals, closely approaches the anguipede goddess. The inventory of the Alexandropol'skiy tumulus, containing depictions of both goddesses together with objects belonging to the shamanic realm, as well as representations of both on the objects from the horse harness, allows further association of the two images. The winged goddess is most probably Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*, and it seems that her relation to the anguipede goddess resembles that of the Ascalon Aphrodite *Ourania* and Derceto-Atargatis: affinity bordering upon identity.[96]

1.2.3.5 *A Seated Woman with a Man Facing Her*

All the objects with this scene were discovered in the tumuli of Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian noblemen of different ranks, containing burials of both a male aristocrat and a female; they have never been found in graves of commoners (Bessonova 1983: 115). It is unclear whether the men and the women were interred simultaneously; however, these representations have never been found in single female tombs and belonged only to women linked to the buried men by bonds of lifetime or posthumous wedlock. Moreover, in one tumulus (Melitopol'skiy) only a female headdress accompanied the deceased man, hence the object itself was believed to possess supernatural qualities (Bessonova 1983: 115; Y. A. Vinogradov 1993: 70).[97]

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[96] A very similar divinity of complex chthonic/solar nature is represented on the magnificent Vratsa ceremonial greave from Thrace (Fol and Marazov 1977: 87; Hoddinott 1981: fig. 112), probably executed by a Thracian master in a Bosporan workshop (Hoddinott 1981: 114). The upper part, covering the knee, is shaped like a woman's head, an ivy wreath on her forehead and her right cheek ornamented with parallel gold stripes. The "body" of the woman is covered with snakes, some of them lion-headed, and monstrous beasts (lions?). Near one of the snakes a bird, likely a dove, is depicted. The goddess' divided face probably conveys the duality of her nature. Some other aspects of this Great Goddess, and essentially her union with the Thracian forefather, imply proximity of functions, and presumably of origin, of the Thracian and the Scythian goddesses. The possibility of Thracian influence on the Bosporus, supposed by the origin of the greave, is also significant.

[97] Calathi were worn by women buried in a dozen Scythian tumuli (Miroshina

The simplest version of this composition is represented on pendants (plate 8: 2), discovered in tumuli all over Scythia: Kul'-Oba, Chertomlyk, Verkhniy Rogachik, the First Mordvinovskiy, Melitopol'skiy, and Oguz (Onayko 1976: 174; Bessonova 1983: 98). They show a sitting goddess wearing a calathus with a veil over it, holding a mirror, and facing her a youth dressed in the Scythian manner, drinking from a rhyton. The exact locations of these pendants in the graves have never been recorded. They were executed with similar dies, and are likely to have decorated the headgear of the buried women (Bessonova 1983: 99). Iconographically, these compositions recall rather numerous representations of a seated Aphrodite holding a mirror. The youth with the rhyton seems to be a local addition (Bessonova 1983: 99).

In a more sophisticated manner a similar scene is depicted on a unique fourth-century BC gold band of a headgear from Sakhnovka (plate 10: 3).[98] Here, a bearded Scythian with a *gorytos* (a case for bow and arrows) hanging on his belt, holding a rhyton in one hand and a scepter(?) in the other, kneels in front of the seated goddess who is posed with a mirror and a round vessel. To the right of the central scene are a musician and two "cup-bearers," to the left—a youth with a "fan," and a pair of "sworn brothers," i.e. two Scythians drinking from one rhyton (Artamonov 1961: 61), and two slayers of a sacrificial ram. The composition depicts the culmination of a sacred feast, the kneeling worshipper or a youthful god uniting with the goddess by drinking the holy beverage. This feast may be compared with the orgiastic festival of Sacaia, celebrated in the Pontus in honor of Anahita (above, 1.2.1.3; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 290).[99] To be sure, Hesychius (s.v. σάκαια) defines Sacaia as a "Scythian feast."

These scenes have been defined as the adoration or communion of the goddess and a god or mortal (Rostovtzev 1913: 6–7, 13–14), probably an endowment of a king with the divine benediction (Rostovtzev 1913: 139; Bessonova 1983: 106), an investiture (Artamonov 1961:

1980). They are a usual headgear of the anguipede goddess and the goddess with leaf-shaped hands, as well as of the goddess portrayed facing a man. As Miroshina (1980: 43–44) suggests, Scythian calathi probably belong to the realm of Argimpasa.

[98] Its singularity and the obscurity of the circumstances of its discovery made some scholars doubt its authenticity (Rostovtzev 1913: 13). However, it was validated by a detailed analysis of the excavation report and the artifact itself (Chernenko and Klochko 1979). On the technology of its execution see Rayevskiy 1985: 162.

[99] It is also suggested to interpret Parthian scenes showing a prince, Mithra and Anahita drinking together as symbolic investiture or *communio* (Carter 1974: 182).

62; Grakov 1971: 83), or a sacred marriage (Rayevskiy 1977b: 97–100). The goddess was identified either as Tabiti (Rayevskiy 1977b: 77–100), or Argimpasa-Aphrodite (Artamonov 1961: 16; Bessonova 1983: 106–107).

To be sure, the mirror, an attribute of Aphrodite, was a symbol of feminine principle, erotica, and fertility, and thus very important in wedding rites, among the Iranian peoples in particular (Rayevskiy 1977b: 97–100; Bessonova 1983: 102). Yet the mirror as an attribute of a goddess does not necessarily mean that the scene was intended to depict a wedding. The mirror was also a magical object used in prophecy and in shamanic ceremonies (Litvinskiy 1964: 97–104). Sarmatians used to bury their priestesses with mirrors (K. F. Smirnov 1964: 152). Thus, the mirror fits the Scythian Aphrodite-Argimpasa both as a goddess of fertility and sexuality, and as a patroness of the soothsayers-*Enareis*.[100]

Spherical vessels of the type shown on the Sakhnovka band were widely used in the cults of the Iranian peoples (Bessonova 1983: 103) and were found in considerable quantities in Scythian sites. Though some scholars relate them to male deities (Artamonov 1961: 79, Rayevskiy 1977b: 58–61), there are many more reasons to associate them with the fertility-goddess: the ornaments on the archaeological vessels are usually vegetal or solar, and in the scenes depicted on objects of art they are either held by a goddess or handed to her (Bessonova 1983: 103–104). On the contrary, rhyta, at least in the Iranian realm, are always connected with cults of male deities (Rostovtzev 1913: 8; Y. A. Vinogradov 1993: 71), and symbolize male force and sexuality (Bessonova 1983: 104). Both ritual vessels are associated with the drinking of a sacred beverage, which was consumed in diverse ceremonies.

Different in composition, but semantically very similar, are the scenes depicting a horseman facing the goddess. On a fourth-century BC rhyton from the Merdzhany tumulus (plate 11; Rostovtzev 1913: 133–136), produced by a Sindian artisan (Onayko 1976: 177), the goddess is represented seated, holding a spherical vessel, a mounted god with a rhyton approaching her throne. To one side of the throne is a seven-branched leafless tree, and to the other side, a pole with a horse skull on it. The tree is a *ficus mundi*, and its presence in the scene may hint that this is a marriage ceremony (Ivanov 1974: 87–89). The pole with the horse's skull testifies to the importance of the horse and the horse sacrifice in the cult of the goddess (Kuz'mina 1977b: 39). The whole scene depicts a communion, possibly conjugal, of this Sindo-Maeotian goddess and a local male deity (Rostovtzev 1913: 139; Ivanova 1954: 240; Artamonov 1961: 62–63; Blavatyskiy 1964b, 2: 18; 1964b, 4: 29; Onayko 1976: 176–177; Bessonova 1983: 111).[101] The composition is parallel to those depicting Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* with a male partner. *Ficus mundi* alongside the goddess and her connection to horses indicate the close similarity of the Merdzhany goddess and the Scythian Aphrodite. These considerations, together with the above-mentioned (1.2.3.1.) evidence on the proximity of the Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian cults of the fertility and vegetation goddess, warrant the comparison of the local Sindo-Maeotian goddess to the Scythian Argimpasa-Aphrodite. Merdzhany is situated on the Asiatic side of the Bosporus, in the area near the great centers of the cult of Aphrodite *Ourania* the Mistress of Apaturum—it is only the local worship of a local goddess that may explain the extraordinary popularity of Aphrodite among the Greek colonists. The Greek name of the goddess is an additional argument in favor of the identification of this local goddess with Aphrodite.

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[100] However, mirrors that are so often shown on the art objects from Scythia proper do not appear on the articles from the Sindo-Maeotian Kuban area (the Merdzhany rhyton, the stele from the Trekhbratniy tumulus, the Karagodeouashkh plate; Y. A. Vinogradov 1993: 70), which indicates a cultural difference.

On a relief from the fourth-century BC Trekhbratniy tumulus (plate 10: 2, Bessonova and Kirilin 1977), a woman in local dress is sitting in a carriage,[102] its coach shaped as a *naiskos*, which implies that the woman is either a goddess or a deified mortal. The horses are drawn by a small charioteer. The woman stretches her hand towards a young beardless horseman with a *gorytos* on his left hip. Another *gorytos* hangs on a pole near the *naiskos*. This detail may be very significant: Herodotus (Her. 1.216) recorded a custom of Massagetae:

> γυναῖκα μὲν γαμέει ἕκαστος, ταύτῃσι δὲ ἐπίκοινα χρέωνται· τὸ γὰρ Σκύθας φασὶ Ἕλληνες ποιέειν, οὐ Σκύθαι εἰσὶ οἱ ποιέοντες ἀλλὰ Μασσαγέται· τῆς γὰρ ἐπιθυμήσῃ γυναικὸς Μασσαγέτης ἀνήρ, τὸν φαρετρεῶνα ἀποκρεμάσας πρὸ τῆς ἁμάξης μίσγεται ἀδεῶς.

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[101] Probably re-enacted in a complex ritual, including the sacrifice of a horse as the king's substitute (Kuz'mina 1977a: 111).

[102] Coins of the Scythian king Skilouros feature a cart with horses on the reverse and the head of a female deity on the obverse (Frolova 1964).

> Each man marries a wife, but the wives are common to all. Although the Greeks say this is a Scythian custom, Massagetae, and not Scythians behave in this way. When a Massagetes desires a woman, he hangs his *gorytos* before her wagon, and has intercourse with her, none hindering. (Translation by A. D. Godley, modified)

Herodotus' remark[103] probably signifies that sexual license existed among Scythians, too, but was less marked. It might have been preserved in a form of ritual promiscuity in honor of Argimpasa-Aphrodite (Machinskiy 1978: 143). If this custom existed among Sindo-Maeotians as well, or if at least the *gorytos* had been preserved as a symbol of a sexual union or wedding, its presence near the carriage of the woman would indicate that the scene illustrates a sacred marriage ceremony. The union may be also expressed in the handclasp of the couple.

A parallel to this scene may be found in the art of the Siberian Scythians: two belt buckles (Machinskiy 1978: 144) show a goddess, whose torso emerges from the earth, her hair interwoven with the branches of a tree[104] above her head, with two dismounted horsemen, one of them sleeping (or laying dead) in her lap, the other holding the horses. On the tree hangs a *gorytos* (Tolstoy and Kondakov 1890: 63, fig. 71; Machinskiy 1978: 143–144). The subject may be also connected with the ritual sleep on the earth (above, 1.2.1.1), and the relation between the Great Goddess and divine twins (below, 1.2.3.6).

The scene on the stele from the Trekhbratniy tumulus (plate 10: 2) may be interpreted as an apotheosis of the deceased noblewoman who was active in the cult of the great Sindo-Maeotian goddess during her lifetime (Bessonova and Kirilin 1977: 133–135).[105] If so, the status of the goddess represented on similar monuments is conferred on the deceased; the relief follows the pattern characteristic of depictions of the goddess with the hero. However, taking into account that similar compositions were executed in different media and sometimes placed in male tombs, it is much more likely that the relief from the Trekhbratniy tumulus shows the goddess herself.

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[103] Strabo (11.8.6), probably using Herodotus, records the same custom.

[104] For the Tree of Life in the art of Siberian Scythians see: Martynov 1987: 19–22.

[105] Carts were found in female burials, while saddle-horses usually accompanied men on their final voyage (Bessonova and Kirilin 1977: 132).

Its meaning is probably the same as in other instances, the communion between the goddess and a god or a hero, which is in this case likely to be conjugal.

It may be interesting to compare the compositions from Merdzhany and the Trekhbratniy tumuli with the scene on a carpet (Artamonov 1961: fig. 7) from a Saka site far away from the Black Sea, the Fifth Pazyryk tumulus in the Altay[106] (Artamonov 1961: 63; 1973: 60–63), dated to the fourth century BC (Artamonov 1973: 151). On this carpet the seated goddess raises her right hand to her head, while the left holds a blossoming branch; a beardless horseman with a mustache approaches her. Here again we see the same vegetation goddess of the Iranian nomads with a hero or god facing her.

This composition remained significant for the late Scythians. On a relief from the site of Chayka (plate 10: 1), dated approximately to the first century BC–first century AD (Popova 1974: 225) a horseman with a bow in his hand approaches a standing woman, who holds a round object, a mirror, a spherical vessel, or a fruit; an altar divides the two.

On another pendant type from the Kul'-Oba tumulus (*SSSV* pl. 45: 19), a goddess is shown in the middle of the composition, a Scythian with a spherical vessel to her right and a blazing incense-burner or a small altar to her left. The communion of the goddess and the man is perhaps represented here as consecrated with fire, which plays a prominent role in the wedding rites of the Iranian peoples (Rayevskiy 1977b: 104). The goddess was considered to be Tabiti (Tolstoy and Kondakov 1889: 44; Artamonov 1961: 58), but since in all the other scenes she is identified as Aphrodite-Argimpasa, and there are no other representations which might be associated with Tabiti, it is likely that these pendants depict the Scythian Aphrodite, too.

In most compositions the male partner is obviously subordinate to the goddess, who is in all probability Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* (Rostovtzev 1913: 16; Bessonova 1983: 106): in many cases he is a youth, standing while she sits, approaching her while she remains on her throne; his figure is usually smaller. Therefore he receives grace, following the communion, and she endows it upon him. However, in some instances the goddess' paredrus is bearded, and when mounted he looks rather imposing: this difference might be explained either as a result of local variations, or as a sign of the growing importance of the warrior-god in the ritual. The mythological basis of the communion was probably a marriage of the goddess to a younger partner (Bessonova 1983: 106) of the Cybele-Attis or Aphrodite-Adonis type.[107] The goddess' paredrus might be the Scythian counterpart of Heracles, the forefather of the Scythians. However, the male partner was conceived not only as a mythological figure, but also as a deified mortal, identified with a hero or a god.

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[106] For the Altay tumuli see Rudenko 1968; 1970.

This scene of communion is polysemantic. The mystical communion with the deity might bless the believer with a promise of afterlife and future resurrection. If the male partner was indeed identified with the forefather of the Scythians, the latter collectively acquired divine origin with the consequent benediction.[108] It may be taken for granted that Scythians were preoccupied with the afterlife: the tremendous resources they invested in proper burial, especially of their aristocracy, and the complicated funeral ritual described by Herodotus, do not leave the slightest doubt that eschatological conceptions played an outstanding role in their ideology.

This communion could also have been conceived as an endowment of the king with royal power (Rostovtzev 1913: 7, 139).[109] In fact, all the objects featuring this scene were discovered in "royal" tumuli, i.e. burials of the local nobility; Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* was honored as power- and victory-giver. This suggestion may be reinforced if the god was indeed Heracles, the father of the first Scythian king: the scene then gives supreme legitimation to the authority of the royal descendants of the goddess spouse. Apotheosis of the king was thus expressed in his identification with the divine progenitor.

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[107] As to his killing, it might be hinted at only by the severed head in the hand of the snake-limbed double of Argimpasa-Aphrodite. However, the head is bearded. In any case, this pendant type alone is certainly not sufficient to infer this particular aspect in the cult of the goddess' partner.

[108] In the *Avesta* Anahita, the goddess of celestial waters, was also the sacred spring, which granted resurrection (Bessonova 1983: 106).

[109] The same notion of the union between the hero and a Mother Goddess as an indispensable act in obtaining royal power occupies a key position in Thracian ideology (Fol and Marazov 1977: 40; 54).

The idea of the communion with the goddess as a guarantee of sovereignty finds perhaps its most striking expression in the representation and the inscription on King Scyles' ring (Y. G. Vinogradov 1980). The gold signet ring was found on the seashore near Istria (modern Dobrudja). A woman seated on a throne and holding a mirror in her right hand and a scepter in her left is engraved on the bezel; near her figure is an inscription ΣΚΥΛΕΩ (Y. G. Vinogradov 1980: figs. 1–2). The letter shapes of this inscription are characteristically early fifth century BC (Y. G. Vinogradov 1980: 96). The ring presumably belonged to the Scythian king, Scyles, whose misfortunes are recorded by Herodotus (4.78–80): a son of a Scythian king by an Istrian Greek woman, he was forced by his brother's intrigues to fleed his country and found his death beside the Istros.

Another inscription, ΚΕΛΕΟΕΑΡΓΟΤΑΝΠΑΡ| ΙΑΝΕ, is incised on the band of the ring. It is more ancient, late sixth century BC (Y. G. Vinogradov 1980: 96–99). Vinogradov (1980: 98) suggests that it be read Κέλεοε ῎Αργοταν πὰρ| ἐ͂ναι, meaning the message "Tell to be with Argotas!" addressed by the ring itself to the goddess portrayed on it. Vinogradov (1980: 97) argues that Argotas was an ancestor of Scyles, who inherited the ring.

In Vinogradov's (1980) interpretation, the inscriptions signify how extremely important the possession of the ring was both to Argotas and to Scyles.[110] The male partner is not pictured on it together with the goddess, because the kings themselves were these partners. The image of the goddess on the ring which passed from generation to generation as a token of royal power belongs therefore to the series of representations of the goddess as a grantor of sovereignty.[111]

There is one more extremely important aspect in the discussed scenes of communion of the goddess and a man. As a number of signs indicate, the investiture might be conceived as a marital union. Thus, the king was elevated to be the spouse of the goddess, and to acquire divine power via sexual intercourse with the goddess. This conception indeed existed in the Near East, the Oriental counterparts of Aphrodite *Ourania* endowing their royal partners with sovereignty (Frymer-Kensky 1992: 55; Dhormé 1945: 71). On a series of Mesopotamian cylinders, the goddess (in one case winged) is shown together with the king, the scene interpreted as a sacred marriage (Barrelet 1955: 246–247). Intimate relations with Aphrodite were in all probability believed to warrant the stability of the royal power at Paphos on Cyprus, where the king boasted of being a descendent of Cinyras, Aphrodite's lover, and both the goddess and the queen were titled simply ἄνασσα, the Lady (Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 346–347, 361; Bonnet 1996: 80).

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[110] Rings as symbols of sovereignty are depicted in Sasanian investiture scenes (above, 1.2.1.3); signet rings were symbols of royal power in Macedonia and in Rome (Y. G. Vinogradov 1980: 100–101, with references).

[111] Anahita in all probability was also represented seated on a throne: two fifth-century BC signet rings from the treasure of the Oxus (Dalton 1964: Nos. 103, 104) portray a seated woman wearing a denticulate crown and holding either a flower and a ring (No. 103) or a flower and a pigeon (No. 104). Kuz'mina (1979) suggests that these signet rings depict Anahita.

For the Thracian neighbors of the Scythians, marriage to the Great Goddess was an indispensable act in obtaining royal power (Fol and Marazov 1977: 40). This marriage was conceived in a most earthly form, so that their kings prepared a bridal chamber for the wedding, as in fact Cotys I did, anticipating the union with Athena (Athen. 531F–532A; Fol and Marazov 1977: 52). Thracians, who were evidently less puritan than Scythians, represented the sexual communion of the hero and the goddess in all its corporeal reality. For instance, the hierogamy scene on one of the famous Letnitsa plaques (Fol and Marazov 1977: 38; Hoddinott 1981: fig. 162; Taylor 1996: fig. 8: 1) shows a seated male straddled from above by a female, their coitus depicted in precise detail; behind this woman stands another female figure, holding a vessel and a branch that obscures the vision of the man. Taylor (1996: 198–199) interprets the scene as a male seduction or rape, the seducer being helped by the other woman, who might have drugged the man with the beverage from the vessel she holds. If this interpretation is correct, this scene presents a close parallel to the Scythian legend of Heracles forced by the anguipede goddess to have sexual intercourse with her (above, 1.2.2). In fact, the woman with a vessel and a branch represents a vegetation goddess, allegedly having an ecstatic aspect (the beverage in the vessel), who apparently is the Great Goddess, protecting the woman. This connection resembles the association of the Scythian anguipede foremother to Argimpasa. The discussed plaque belongs to a series of bridle decorations, depicting various exploits of presumably the same hero (Fol and Marazov 1977: 34–35; Hoddinott 1981: figs. 158–162), who is considered a tribal progenitor

(Hodinott 1981: 172) or the first king (Fol and Marazov 1977: 40; Gocheva 1981: 160–161),[112] and therefore may be compared to the Scythian Heracles. Finds in Galiche and Razgrad (above, 1.2.3.4), where objects with representations of an august goddess were discovered together with those showing a horseman, likely attest to the second aspect of the Letnitsa scene: the connection between the Great Goddess and the hero, perhaps his endowment with power by the goddess. Scenes showing a horseman facing a standing or seated goddess, a tree with a coiling snake (Tree of Life) between them, are represented on numerous votive stelae and plaques from Thrace (*EC* 140, Nos. 2: 39, 55, 74; *CCET* Nos. 31, 63, etc.). Thus, Thracian ideology resembled that of the Scythians in another important aspect, the Thracian Great Goddess being replaced by another female, apparently a very similar subordinate deity (cf. Gocheva 1981: 156), as the sexual partner of the forefather-founder of the royal dynasty (cf. Fol and Marazov 1977: 34, 40), which implies that the Great Goddess herself was considered not the foremother of the people, but the divine patron of its kings and grantor of royal power.

The same is true for the Scythians, for whom the female sexual partner of their forefather almost merged with the divine spouse of the king, the two remaining nevertheless distinct. Herodotus, with his inclination to furnish Greek names to the local deities, never calls the anguipede monster or Borysthenes' daughter "Aphrodite," nor have three additional authors ever mentioned her in their versions of the genealogical myth. On the contrary, they classified the Scythian foremother as a nymph, not even a goddess. Moreover, in the Roman period semi-Sarmatian, semi-Thracian kings of the Bosporan kingdom, who claimed their origin from Heracles and Poseidon in a most emphatic form and ardently venerated Aphrodite *Ourania*, nevertheless never hinted at the possibility of descent from Aphrodite. Thus, Aphrodite *Ourania* and the anguipede goddess are distinct, in spite of the proximity of their functions. Their relationship was probably similar to that between Ascalon Aphrodite-Astarte and Derceto-Atargitis, bordering on identity, but never really reaching it.

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[112] Since the hairstyle of the hero of the battle and hunting scenes is different from that of the male in the hierogamy scene, the latter might be supposed to be the father of the former, and thus the whole series represents the story of the birth and heroic deeds of the first king, warrior and hunter, who is believed to be the son of the progenitor hero.

1.2.3.6 *The Karagodeouashkh Plate*

The composition of the gold triangular plate (plate 9) from the Karagodeouashkh tumulus (fourth–early third century BC)[113] in the Kuban area is unique in Scythian art. The plate decorated a headdress absolutely identical to the one depicted on it, even to such details as the division of the triangular plate into three registers. Hence, the woman who was interred with this headgear was compared to the goddess represented on it, but since it cannot be established whether the headdress was intended for the funeral or was worn by the woman, presumably a priestess, during her lifetime, the comparison implied by the plate might have expressed either the proximity between the goddess and her servant, or the apotheosis of the deceased (Shaub 1987a: 155).

In the upper register of the plate a woman dressed in a Greek chiton and himation is represented holding cornucopia; in the middle register a person wearing a chiton rides in a carriage drawn by two horses; in the lower register the characters, all of them wearing Scythian dress, are arranged in two rows: the foreground is dominated by a woman seated in a hieratic position, wearing a sophisticated headgear featuring a decorated triangular plate, two beardless youths sitting on the same bench by her sides, the left one holding a round vessel and the right one, with a *gorytos* on his hip,[114] either handing a rhyton to the woman, who touches it with her right hand, or receiving it from her.[115] In the background are two standing beardless persons with a sort of hood covering their heads. The three registers are divided by ornamental bands: ova between the lower and the middle registers; two griffins flanking a blazing thymiaterion between the middle and the lower ones; and female masks and *boukrania* below the lower register.

The cultic nature of the plate seems doubtless to most of its students.[116] However, its general interpretation and especially the meaning of the lower register are still disputed (Rostovtzev 1913: 9–16;

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[113] For discussions of the date see Blavatskiy 1974: ·38; Y. A. Vinogradov 1993: note 2.

[114] The object was defined as such by Bessonova (1983: 107); formerly it was considered an edge of his cloak (of which actually no other traces are seen; Mantzevich 1964: 132).

[115] The latter interpretation of the gesture is preferred by Rostovtzev (1913: 10).

[116] Lappo-Danilevskiy and Mal'mberg (1894: 8), and Minns (1913: 61) describe the scene in the lower register as representing a queen with her attendants; Mantzevich

Gorodtzov 1926; Artamonov 1961: 60; Mantzevich 1964; Blavatyskiy 1964b, 4: 29; Bessonova 1983: 106–111).

The division of the plate into three registers corresponds to the division of the universe into three levels (Gorodtzov 1926: 21). Partition into three levels repeatedly appears on the Danubian tablets, and characters on some of them even resemble those of the Karagodeouashkh plate: a seated goddess with "initiates" to her side in the lower register, "Tyche," flanked by fish, dead bodies, or other characters in the middle register; and a solar deity in the upper register (Rostovtzev 1913: 42–56, pls. 2–7). However, the parallelism between the Danubian tablets (most of them dated to the Roman period) and the Karagodeouashkh plate is far from being complete: contrary to the Karagodeouashkh plate, the deity of the upper level obviously dominates the entire composition, which is much more crowded; the shapes of the tablets are different, etc.

The character in the upper register was defined as Tyche (Rostovtzev 1913: 15; Rostovtzeff 1922: 105; Ivanova 1954: 237; Mantzevich 1964: 131; Bessonova 1983: 108) in her Iranian aspect of divine bliss-*xvarenah*[117] (Rostovtzev 1913: 15); and the charioteer of the middle register as the Iranian Sun-god (Rostovtzeff 1922: 105), Nike (Mantzevich 1964: 131), Apollo-Goitosyros (Blavatskiy 1964b, 4: 28; Kochelenko and Blawatsky 1966: 6), or Helios (Bessonova 1983: 108).[118] In fact, a solar god with radiate head, riding a two- or four-horse carriage, presumably Apollo-Goitosyros (cf. Kuz'mina 1977: 100), appears on a number art objects, interred in indigenous burials of the area of the Bosporus beginning from the third century BC (Saprykin 1983: 70, fig. 3). The charioteer of the Karagodeouashkh plate is most likely this Iranian solar charioteer (below, 2.4.2.4).

The images of the upper and middle registers were obviously modeled on classical prototypes (Ivanova 1954: 237), possibly as well as

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(1964) maintains that the lower scene depicts a funeral feast, comparing the Karagodeouashkh plate with the painting on the cupola of the Kazanluk tomb (Hoddinott 1981: 124–126), which in her opinion depicts this subject. However, the Kazanluk painting in all probability represents a scene of hierogamy (Fol and Marazov 1977: 43; 47).

[117] For *xvarenah* as Tyche cf. Carter 1974: 176.

[118] Very similar is a composition depicting a winged Nike with a wreath in her hand, riding a four-horse chariot, that appears on two Thracian plaques, belonging to a chain mail. They flank another plaque, featuring the head of Medusa (Fol and Marazov 1977: 109). Since the Karagodeouashkh plate is cut on both long sides of the triangle, the chariot shown on it was probably initially drawn by four horses also (cf. Rostovtzev 1913: 14).

the figure of the goddess in the lower register (Bessonova 1983: 108). Gorodtzov (1926: 22) suggested that the same goddess is shown in all three registers, majestically reigning the world from the heaven in the upper register, driving the sun-chariot in the middle, accepting the veneration of mortals and blessing them in the lower register. The only obstacle preventing an unrestrained adoption of his approach is that the style of the plate is somewhat eclectic (Ivanova 1954: 237): even the fashion of attire worn by the characters depicted in the two upper registers differs from that of the lower one. However, this discrepancy might be the result of an introduction of Greek aesthetic notions by the Greek manufacturer of the plate; the composition on the whole produces an impression of unity, and therefore its components are to be interpreted as an integral system.[119]

The subject of the scene in the lower register of the Karagodeouashkh plate, according to Rostovtzev (1913: 17; Rostovtzeff 1922: 104–105), is the adoration of the local Astarte-Anahita, or the imparting of power to the youth with the rhyton, in the presence of a eunuch priest, the second seated character, who holds the round vessel. His opinion was adopted by a number of scholars, who were occupied principally with the definition of the goddess: "the Sindo-Maeotian Great Goddess" (Ivanova 1954: 240), Tabiti (Artamonov 1961: 64), Aphrodite *Ourania Apatouros* (Blavatyskiy 1964b, 4: 29; Kochelenko and Blawatsky 1966: 6). Since the Scytho-Maeotian Aphrodite was actually the only goddess represented in the local art, and all the motifs of the dividing bands of the plate conform with her diverse aspects, it is quite reasonable to regard the goddess as the Sindo-Maeotian Aphrodite, corresponding to Bosporan Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa*. Representations of the deity in the upper and middle registers support this suggestion: the Greek cornucopia indeed signifies fertility and good fortune, the Iranian *xvarenah*; and the Iranian Anahita, with whom Scytho-Maeotian Aphrodite *Ourania* was affiliated, was described as riding a chariot (*Aban Yasht* 2.11; Kuz'mina 1977a: 98). This identification is reinforced by the gold pendants in the form of doves and gorgoneia, decorating, along with the plate, the headgear of the buried woman (Lappo-Danilevskiy and Mal'mberg 1894: 8–9), both symbols belonging to Aphrodite *Ourania* (Shaub 1987a: 157).

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[119] For the interpretation of the representations of a deity riding a chariot see below, 2.4.2.4.

However, it seems that although the youth with the rhyton is very similar to the male character placed in front the goddess in a number of compositions, depicting the goddess and her paredrus, the present one differs from those discussed above, since both youths are represented as equals, and do not look like simple mortals, their divinity probably expressed in their sitting on the same bench with the goddess (Bessonova 1983: 109). Therefore Bessonova suggests that the scene represents the Indo-European trinity of the Great Goddess and divine twins, such as Dioscouroi, Asvins, or the twins of the Dacian tablets, and that the entire plate relates the idea of the celestial wedding, its indispensable attribute being the sun chariot (Bessonova 1983: 109).

In fact, pre-Zoroastrian Anahita was connected with Nahaithya, the divine twins (Widengren 1965: 18). In Indo-European ideology, the divine twins were companions of the mother-goddess, usually depicted flanking her constant symbol, the Tree of Life (Przyluski 1950: 114–115; Ivanov1974; Kuz'mina 1977a: 102–103; 1977b: 39; Grottanelli 1986: 125). Iranian Anahita was accompanied by two Nahaithya (Widengren 1965: 18). The divine twins had evidently been horses before their transformation into horsemen (Przyluski 1950: 92; Grottanelli 1986), the Indian Asvins and English Horsa and Hengist even bearing horse-names (Mallory 1991: 135). They were sometimes represented as two horsemen (or just horses) standing symmetrically near a goddess or a tree (Gorodtzov 1926: 7–18); some Sarmatian royal brands might reproduce this scheme (Kuz'mina 1977b: 39, cf. Solomonik 1959: 20; fig. 4: 1–3).

The cult of the divine twins probably existed in Scythia:[120] Lucian describes the veneration of Orestes and Pylades and their Scythian temple (*Toxaris* 5). If his information rested on a factual basis and was not mere invention for artistic purposes, one might guess that two youthful friends were probably perceived as twins; twin heroes appear in the Ossetian *Nartes* epos (Abayev 1965: 86–92). A tiny figurine of two men embracing one another was discovered in a late Scythian burial at Krasny Mayak (*SSSV* pl. 51: 48). In Neapolis Scythica two bronze figurines of Dioscouroi of Greek work, dated to the third–second centuries BC and the first–second centuries AD, were found in an ash altar together with a Greek terracotta head of a goddess. The ash altar was situated near a wall of a cultic building where a fertility goddess had been worshipped, to judge by the crude figurines of a goddess and of rams, found in a pit inside the building (Shul'tz 1969: 120–121).

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[120] For the cult of Dioscouroi in the Greek cities of the Northern Black Sea littoral see Shul'tz 1969: 132.

The duality of the divine twins, implying the contrast of death against fertility and resurrection (Przyluski 1950: 116–121),[121] as well as their relation to royalty and warrior societies (Burkert 1985: 17, 212–213) makes them suitable partners for a goddess like Argimpasa-Aphrodite and explains their depiction on an object from a royal burial.

The two youths are certainly subordinate to the goddess, who reigns in the scene, and thus seem to belong to an inferior rank in the mythical hierarchy, probably that of the heroes. Two brothers, the first Scythian kings, the sons of Heracles and the monstrous creature, who is closely associated with Argimpasa-Aphrodite, are mentioned in two versions of the Scythian genealogical legend, that of Diodorus and the *Tabula Albana* (above, 1.2.2). Twins appear as founders of royal dynasties elsewhere: Romulus and Remus in Rome, Horsa and Hengist in England (Mallory 1991: 135, 140); Dioscouroi were believed to be responsible for the duality of the Spartan kingship (Burkert 1985: 212). Hence, the pair of Scythian Heraclidai might be shown together with the goddess, although one cannot push this conjecture too far.

The two figures in the background are unlikely to be priestesses or eunuch priests, since the rest of the characters on the plate are only supernatural beings. They may be female mythological attendants of the goddess, whose specific functions in the scene of the communion between the goddess and the pair of heroes are unclear.

On the whole, the Karagodeouashkh plate, with the main scene showing a communion of Scytho-Maeotian Aphrodite *Ourania* with a pair of heroes, conveys the ideas of eternal life and resurrection (Bessonova 1983: 109–110), as well as of divine legitimation of the royal power (Rostovtzev 1913: 9–16).

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[121] The opposition between the Greek Dioscouroi, the mortal Castor and the immortal Polydeuces (Burkert 1985: 212–213) demonstrates this duality in a most explicit form.

1.2.4 *Conclusions*

Tabiti-Hestia and Api-Ge, two of the three great goddesses of Scythia, personified primordial cosmic forces and almost lacked anthropomorphic images: they were probably prominent in cult, but failed to develop human-like mythological characters or to inspire their artistic representation. Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*, on the contrary, evolved as a distinct divine personality, with her own cult, mythology, and iconography, presumably due to the powerful impact of Near Eastern religions. The realm of Scythian Argimpasa-Aphrodite embraced fertility of the animal and vegetal kingdoms, the underworld and heaven, the life of the entire Scythian people and the stability of royal power. Other Iranian peoples of the South Russian steppes also worshipped goddesses, who highly resembled Scythian Argimpasa and were usually compared to Greek Aphrodite. Closely related to this great goddess, and sometimes nearly identical, but nevertheless discernible as a distinct divinity, was the anguipede Scythian foremother, very popular also among other peoples of the Northern Black Sea littoral.

Only Argimpasa and the anguipede goddess were represented in art. Their iconography discloses aspects common to both: both are *Potniai theron*, protecting also horses, embodiments of the Tree of Life, chthonic and celestial at the same time. However, the snake-limbed goddess is closer to primitive bestiality and the elementary forces of nature and seems subordinate to Aphrodite *Ourania*, who is more involved in human affairs, and from the fourth century BC gradually turns into a power-giver and majestic patroness of the king.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GREAT GODDESS OF THE BOSPORUS IN THE LATE FIRST CENTURY BC–THE FOURTH CENTURY AD

1.3.1 *Epigraphic Evidence*

1.3.1.1 *Aphrodite Ourania Apatourou Medeousa*

Aphrodite *Ourania* was honored in the overwhelming majority of the Bosporan dedications from the Imperial period. A stele (*CIRB* 31, 9/8 BC–AD 7/8), with a dedication Ἀφροδίτῃ Οὐρανίᾳ Ἀπατούρου μεδεούσηι, erected by a private person and his wife ὑπὲρ βασιλίσσης Δυνάμεως φιλορωμαίου, and a statue base (*CIRB* 35, AD 243), erected by a son of a πρίνκιψ[1] θεᾷ Ἀφροδ[είτῃ Οὐ]ρανίᾳ Ἀπατούρ(ου) με[δε]ούσηι, were found in Panticapaeum.

However, it was the Asiatic Bosporus that continued to play a leading role in Aphrodite's cult. Since in the first centuries AD Panticapaeum gradually lost its importance and the center of the Bosporan Kingdom moved to Phanagoria, there were additional reasons for the increasing popularity of the tutelary goddess of this city.

During the turbulent first century BC–first century AD the great sanctuaries of the goddess on the Taman peninsula must have suffered considerable damage. In fact, the famous Apaturum itself in Pliny's time was deserted (*Hist. Nat.* 6.6.18: *paene desertum Apaturos*). Therefore in AD 105 the king of the Bosporus, Tiberios Iulius Sauromates, restored the porticos (περιναίους στοὰ[ς τὰ]ς τῶν---[χρόνωι κα]θῃρημένας) of the Hermonassa temple. The practical supervision was entrusted to an official who was titled ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν (*CIRB* 1045). Rostovtzev (1913: 29; 1990a: 181) observes that ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν, the minister of religion, corresponds to the office of the supreme priest of the main sanctuary, subordinate only to the king, in the Iranian monarchies of the Pontus and Cappadocia.[2]

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[1] The responsibilities of a πρίνκιψ in the Bosporan kingdom remain unclear.

[2] This office occurs also in *CIRB* 976 and 1129.

The royal court, or at least people serving there, continued to honor Aphrodite in Hermonassa during the second century AD. A synod of Aphrodite (θεᾶς Ἀφροδείτης), headed by ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς αὐλῆς, the chancellor of the royal palace (Minns 1913: 613; Gaydukevich 1949: 341; Gajdukevič 1971: 360), set up there a dedication to the goddess (*CIRB* 1055).

In another inscription set up by a Hermonassa synod, apparently under Cotys II (*CIRB* 1054; AD 123/4–132/3), the name of the deity is not preserved. The synod was headed by a νακόρος, followed by ἱρεύς (*sic*), ἱερομάστωρ, γραμματεύς, φιλάγαθος, and a list of λοιποὶ θιασεῖται.

Νακόρος is a Doric form of νεωκόρος, which penetrated the *koine* and was used elsewhere in the Greek-speaking world (comm. to *CIRB* 1054). The word initially designated a temple servant (Eurip. *Ion* 82) or official (Xen. *Anab.* 5.3.6–7).[3] As to the responsibilities of the *neokoroi*, in Panamara (Caria), for instance, the *neokoros* was one of the most important temple officials, usually an ex-priest, who was in charge of the archives and the finances of the sanctuary (Laumonier 1958: 231), but this evidence certainly cannot be applied directly to the Bosporus. The functions of the *nakoros* in Hermonassa remain therefore unclear.

The word ἱερομάστωρ, which appears only on the Bosporus, according to Latyshev (comm. to *IPE* IV 421) designates "a searcher" or "a seeker" of sacred things, in other words, ἱεροποιός. However, the exact responsibilities of the *hieromastor* remain obscure (comm. to *CIRB* 1054; Minns 1913: 624; Gaydukevich 1949: 435; Gajdukevič 1971: 454). As to other officials, they are usually mentioned in the inscriptions of Bosporan cult associations (below, 2.1.2). This document may be compared with *CIRB* 1005 from Phanagoria, containing the word νεωκορεῖον (lines 4, 26), which designates a room or a building where sacred ceremonies were to be performed. Since there can be almost no doubt that *CIRB* 1005 describes ceremonies in honor of Aphrodite *Ourania*, and another synod known in Hermonassa also worshipped Aphrodite, *CIRB* 1054 might be related to her cult, although this cannot be definitely determined.[4]

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[3] A female *neokoros* enjoyed the privilege of entering the temple of Aphrodite at Sicyon (Paus. 2.10.4); a collegium of *neokoroi* served Aphrodite in her temple at Aphrodisias (Laumonier 1958: 485). In the Roman period most prominent people sought the title of νεωκόρος (νακόρος), cities housing important sanctuaries could also be thus named, and in a Bosporan third-century AD inscription the city of Heraclea Pontica is called νεωκόρος (*CIRB* 59).

CIRB 1005 from Phanagoria is dated according to its script to the second century AD.[5] Although the stele is unfortunately badly damaged, the text can be defined as a *lex sacra* of a mystery cult,[6] the word μυσ[τήρια?] even appearing in line 24. The only title of an official preserved on the stone is ὁ ἐπὶ τ[ῆ]ς αὐλῆς. The deity honored is twice called ἡ θεά (lines 11, 23). As "the Goddess" appears alone, it is certain that the mysteries are not Eleusinian, which belonged to "the two Goddesses." Ziehen (Ziehen, von Prott 1896–1906: 2.1.250) supposed that the goddess was Bendis or Isis; Zhebelyov (Latyshev's archive; comm. to *CIRB* 1005) suggested that Meter, mentioned in two third-century BC Bosporan dedications, *CIRB* 21 and 23, fits better. However, Aphrodite was referred to in lapidary inscriptions from the Bosporan kingdom of the first centuries AD more frequently than all the other goddesses together. Aphrodite *Ourania* was the tutelary goddess of the Bosporan kingdom, and her ancient sanctuary was situated in Phanagoria; in the ceremonies described in the *lex sacra* a royal courtier[7] was involved. Οἰνόμελι, "mead," mentioned in l. 12, is a beverage singled out by Aphrodite (Vollgraff 1949: 68): Κύπριδος οἰνόμελι (*Anth. Pal.* 12.164.4). It seems therefore certain that ἡ θεά of *CIRB* 1005 is also Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* (Rostovtzev 1913: 17; Vollgraff 1949: 68).

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[4] One might associate two additional inscriptions mentioning *hieromastor* with the cult of Aphrodite, the fragment (*CIRB* 988) from Phanagoria and a tombstone set up by the thiasos for its deceased member (*CIRB* 1016) from the modern village of Akhtanizovskaya. For the titles of the associations' officials and their significance see below, 2.1.1–2.1.2.

[5] The text of *CIRB* 1005:

> - - - δκα - - - ω - - | - - - λύχνοις ἐχ - - - | - - - [ὁ δὲ ἱερεὺ]ς θυέτω ἐπὶ τ[ῷ βωμῷ - - - τελείσ]θω ἐν τῷ νεωκο[ρεί| ῳ - - - λιβα]νωτίσας θυέτω ἐπ[ί τῷ βωμῷ - - - ε]ἰς ὁλοκαύστησιν μηρ[ὸν| καὶ - - - καὶ εἰς] κάλυψιν τὸ ἀρκοῦν κεφα|λῆς· τῷ ἱερεῖ - - - ἡ γλῶσ]σα καὶ ἡ δόρα· ὁμοίως| [δὲ - - - θυέτω ἐπὶ τ]ῷ βωμῷ ἄνευ τοῦ μηροῦ| - - - σπόνγους πλὴν ὃς τὰ| - - - [δώσει εἰς τὸ δεῖπν]ον τῆς θεᾶς ἀλεύρου| - - - [οἰ]νομέλιτος ξέσ(τας) γ'| - - - [εἰς λύχν]ους ἐλαίου κοτ(ύλας) δ'| [ἐὰν δὲ - - - δ]ώσει ἄλλας κοτ(ύλας) δ'.| - - - ιον σὺν φυρτῇ καὶ στέφα|[νον? - - - ἐπὶ τῷ β]ωμῷ καὶ οὕτως εἰσφε|[ρέτω] - - - οις β' καὶ λαμπροῖς καθό|[τι καὶ πρότερον?] - - - ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τῷ δωδε|[κάτῳ - - - κα]ὶ ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον προσ|καλείσθω?] - - - ος ὁ ἐπὶ τ[ῆ]ς αὐλῆς ἐπι|[μελείσθω? - - ὅπως ὁ χ]ῶρος σαρῶται β' καὶ| - - - τριῶν καὶ τοῦ προεσ|[τῶτος?] - - - ι τ(ῆ)ς θεᾶς δειπνι|[ζέτω? - - - ἐ]πιτελείσθω τὰ μυσ[τήρια? - - - τελείσ]θωσαν ἐν τῷ νεω|[κορείῳ - - - ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖ]πνον κωλεόν - - - | - - -

[6] And therefore published by Ziehen and von Prott in their collection of sacred laws (1896–1906: 2.1 No. 86).

[7] The same official, ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς αὐλῆς, headed the synod in the dedication to Aphrodite from Hermonassa, *CIRB* 1055.

As already mentioned, the location of the ceremonies was the νεωκορεῖον (lines 4, 26). They were probably performed at night, therefore, both lamps, λύχνοι (line 2) and oil for them, [εἰς λύχν]ους ἐλαίου κοτ(ύλας) δ′ (line 13), are referred to in the document.[8] Frankincense was burnt before the sacrifice: λιβα]νωτίσας θυέτω, line 5. Although this custom was normal in all the Greek cults, incense was associated particularly with Aphrodite (Burkert 1985: 62), and on the Bosporan stele *CIRB* 75 thymiaterion was in fact shown (plate 4).

As to the sacrifice itself, it is unclear from the words of line 6 ε]ἰς ὁλοκαύστησιν μηρ[όν, and of lines 8–9: ὁμοίως [δὲ . . . . θυέτω ἐπὶ τ]ῷ βωμῷ ἄνευ τοῦ μηροῦ, whether only one hip was to be burnt, as the editors of *CIRB* suggest in their translation, and the rest of the meat consumed, or the victim was to be burnt in its entirety, without one thigh. Since the last line of the inscription reads. . . . ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖ]πνον κωλεόν, the latter seems more likely. One of the participants, evidently the priest, received the hide and maybe also the tongue of the sacrificial animal: ἡ γλῶσ]σα καὶ ἡ δορά, line 8. The sacrifice was followed by a feast: although the word δεῖπνον appears only in a fragmentary form, τ(ῆ)ς θεᾶς δειπνι[ζέτω? . . ., lines 23–24; τὸ δεῖ]πνον, line 26, its restorations are fairly certain, particularly because such items, as ἄλευρον (line 11), [οἰ]νόμελι (line 12), and φυρτή (line 15) are also mentioned.

The chthonic nature of the goddess might be hinted at by the nighttime celebrations and the holocaust of the victim, if the suggested interpretation of the fragmentary text is indeed correct. However, the sacrifice was performed on a *bomos*, not an *eschara*, and a banquet, likely including consumption of a part of the sacrificial animal, its thigh, was part of the ceremony. Thus, the ritual that is described in this sacred law, with its blending of chthonic and Olympian features,[9] fits very well the mystery cult of a major fertility deity, and is just what one could expect in the Bosporan cult of Aphrodite *Ourania*, who was celestial and chthonic at the same time.

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[8] For nocturnal celebrations in honor of the Greek Aphrodite, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 395.

[9] For the opposition of Olympian/chthonic, see Burkert 1985: 199–203; Scullion 1994. However, the distinction between Olympian and chthonic rites has never been regarded as absolute (Scullion 1994: 97–117; cf. Clinton 1992: 61–63; 1996: 169), although it was certainly appreciated quite well in ancient times, and there-

The goddess was called ἡ θεός in another document from Phanagoria, inscribed on a statue base (*CIRB* 976, AD 151):

> Τιβέριος Ἰούλιος βασιλεὺς| Ῥοιμητάλκης, φιλόκαισαρ καὶ φι|λορώμαιος, εὐσεβής, τὰς ὑπὸ| Λητοδώρου ἀνατεθείσας γέας| ἐν Φιαννέοις καὶ τοὺς πελάτας| κατὰ τὸν παρακείμενον τελαμῶ|να χρόνωι μειωθέντα συναθροί|σας ἅπαντα καὶ πλεονάσας ἀπε|κατέστησε τῆι θεῶι σῶα, δι᾽ ἐπι|μελείας Ἀλεξάνδρου Μυρείνου| τοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν. ημυ´, μηνὶ| Ἀπελλαίωι κ´.[10]
>
> Tiberios Iulius, king Rhoimetalces, a friend of the Caesar and of the Romans, pious, having gathered and augmented the lands in Thianneoi that were dedicated by Letodoros, and *pelatai*, according to the record on the monument that stands nearby, that decreased with time,[11] restored them safe to the goddess, by the concern of Alexandros, son of Myreinos, the minister of religion, in 448, in the month of Apellaios, 20.

This inscription presents unique evidence of the existence of a temple estate, having lands and πελάται, half-free serfs (Gaydukevich 1949: 363; Rostovtzev 1989c: 130). This institution, which is not attested elsewhere on the Bosporus (Gaydukevich 1949: 363; Gajdukevič 1971: 213–215, 387), is well-known in other parts of the Hellenistic-Roman world (Debord 1982: 127–177), notably in the Kingdom of

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fore cannot be claimed as a modern construction, as for instance, suggested by Schlesier (1991/2). In any case, the beneficent side of the chthonic deities, and especially of the most popular among them, could be celebrated with a participatory sacrifice (Scullion 1994: 114), even in Classical Athens (Ustinova 1996: 231–232), to say nothing of the Bosporan Kingdom in the Roman epoch.

An almost exact parallel to the usage described in *CIRB* 1005 is supplied by Pausanias (2.10.1) in his description of the unusual sacrificial rite at Paedize, one of the Sicyonian sanctuaries of Heracles:

> καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἄρνα οἱ Σικυώνιοι σφάξαντες καὶ τοὺς μηροὺς ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ καύσαντες τὰ μὲν ἐσθίουσιν ὡς ἀπὸ ἱερείου, τὰ δὲ ὡς ἥρωι τῶν κρεῶν ἐναγίζουσι.
>
> Even at present the Sicyonians, after slaughtering the victim and burning its thighs upon the altar, eat some of the meat as part of a victim given to a god, and the rest they offer as to a hero. (Translation by W. H. S. Jones, modified)

Most notable here is the explicit intention of the Sicyonians to give the complex nature of Heracles adequate expression in the ritual.

[10] Stephani, in his first publication of the inscription in 1860, misread ΣΟΑ as ΣΟΛ, whence this error was adopted even in Roscher's lexicon (1909/14: 4. 1153), although by that time the correct reading of Latyshev, *IOSPE* II 353, had already been published (comm. to *CIRB* 976).

[11] Μειωθέντα can belong only to τὰς . . . γέας . . . καὶ τοὺς πελάτας, and certainly not to τελαμῶνα. *Anacoloutha* like this were not infrequent in late Bosporan inscriptions (see *CIRB* pp. 823–830).

Pontus (T. Reinach 1895: 238–245; Raditsa 1983: 110; Olshausen 1990: 1886; Isager 1990: 84; Mitchell 1995, 1: 82), whence the royal dynasty originated. The most famous holy temple estate of the Pontus, Zela, was consecrated primarily to Anahita-Anaitis (Raditsa 1983: 109; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 289).

The goddess is referred to as in *CIRB* 1005, ἡ θεός. The only goddess that could be nominated in that way in Phanagoria, just as Athena in Athens or Artemis in Ephesos, was certainly Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* (Rostovtzev 1913: 17, 29; Rozanova 1949b: 172; Gajdukevič 1971: 387; Kobylina 1989: 106).[12] Moreover, although the inscription was discovered in Phanagoria, the serfs and the lands lying in Thianneoi,[13] which Letodoros had once dedicated to the goddess together with the serfs (Latyshev, comm. to *IOSPE* II 353), were not necessarily owned by the Phanagorian temple. The estate could have belonged to the great Apaturum sanctuary itself. The statue, to which the base *CIRB* 976 belonged, could have been set up in the civic center of Phanagoria, alongside a number of other statues already standing there, of which five bases are preserved.[14]

In fact, from Pliny's use of the form *desertum Apaturos* (5.18), two conclusions are clear. The sanctuary had suffered damage, and therefore Rhoimetalces' help was badly needed. Apaturum was *oppidum*, like other places he mentioned in the same phrase, *oppida in aditu Bospori* (Tokhtas'yev 1986: 142): the writer preserved the Greek ending *-os*, while the names of sanctuaries, even with the omission of ἱερόν, would normally have the ending -ον in Greek, hence *-on* or *-um* in Latin. Thus, at least by the first century AD the area around the sanctuary of Apaturum was settled.[15] Since this is the only case on the Bosporus that is known from sources other than *CIRB* 976, it is reasonable to suppose that the land in Thianneoi belonged to Apaturum, although the possibility that both temples, in Phanagoria as well as in Apaturum, had its estates, cannot be excluded.

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[12] The suggestion of Lurye (1948: 210), that the goddess is Artemis *Agrotera*, is absolutely unacceptable.

[13] Rozanova maintained that Thianneoi was a suburb of Phanagoria or a small settlement around the sanctuary.

[14] *CIRB* 971; 972—a fourth-century BC dedications to Aphrodite *Ourania*; *CIRB* 974—fourth-century BC dedication to Apollo *Iatros*; *CIRB* 978—a statue of Livia erected by the queen Dynamis; *CIRB* 979—a statue of Dynamis herself, the two latter statues set up in late first century BC–early first century AD.

[15] Strabo (11.2.10) also lists Apaturum among towns (λοιπαὶ πόλεις), but since he calls Apaturum ἱερόν in the same passage, Tokhtas'yev (1986: 142) is reluctant to accept his evidence as testimony that Strabo's source considered Apaturum a temple city. He explains the use of the expression λοιπαὶ πόλεις as a denomination of all the settlements mentioned in the phrase by the lack of a word appropriate both to a city and a sanctuary in Greek. However, Gaydukevich (Gajdukevič 1971: 228), interpreting Strabo's evidence, describes Apaturum as *Tempelstadt*.

In Gorgippia, an important port, θέασος (*sic*) ναυκλήρων was active in the late second–early third century AD, erecting statues to Poseidon and restoring his temple, the king and his court also participating in this pious enterprise (*CIRB* 1134). The cult of Aphrodite *Nauarchis*, attested by a first-century BC inscription from Panticapaeum (*CIRB* 30, above, 1.1.1.3) existed also in Gorgippia. In AD 110, under Sauromates I, the governor-general of the city, ὁ ἐπὶ Γοργιππείας, erected a temple θεᾷ Ἀφροδείτῃ Ναυαρχίδι from his personal resources, in fulfillment of a vow (*CIRB* 1115).

Curious is the use of the definition θεᾷ, which seems unnecessary in the context of this inscription, as well as in *CIRB* 35 and 1055, but was common in Bosporan inscriptions when referring to gods. As to the epithet of Aphrodite, it conveys the continuation of the Bosporan tradition of worshipping Aphrodite as *Nauarchis*, which was first attested in the mid-first century BC.

Finally, in AD 193, in Tanais, Zenon son of Zenon, from an aristocratic Bosporan family, dispatched to that far away emporium by the king, set up a dedication to Zeus, Ares, and Aphrodite.[16] It was offered to these gods in gratitude for their protection and guidance, after a number of prominent military victories[17] on the land and on the sea (*CIRB* 1237). Honoring Aphrodite as a grantor of military success reflects her warlike aspect, as well as probably her connection with the sea, since in naval battles she must have been especially important.

1.3.1.2 *Other Goddesses*

As already mentioned above, only a few inscriptions from the Roman Bosporus refer to goddesses other than Aphrodite. An ex-voto found in the vicinity of Tanais, and probably originating from the city, is addressed θεᾷ Ἀρτέμ[ι]δι μ]εδεού[σῃ] ΝΕΩΟΥΩΙ (*CIRB* 1315, AD 173).

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[16] This triad, in the opinion of Rostovtzev (1913: 29), corresponds to Iranian Ahura-Mazda, Mithra, and Anahita; Shelov (1972: 297, note 186) rejects this correlation.

[17] Their importance is discussed in: Gaydukevich 1949: 335; Gajdukevič 1971: 353.

The words θεὰ . . . μεδέουσα on the Bosporus always refer to Aphrodite, the only exception being the fourth-century BC dedication to Ἑκάτη Σπάρτης μεδέουσα (*CIRB* 22).[18] Both Latyshev and the editors of *CIRB* consider the bizarre letters after μ]εδεού|[σῃ] to be a mistake on the part of Mordtmann, its original publisher. As the stone had already disappeared before *IOSPE* was published, there is no way of knowing the correct spelling. This negligence in copying the text renders its general reliability questionable: one cannot be sure that APTEM . . ., and not some other letters, were in fact inscribed on the lost stone; hence the evidence of *CIRB* 1315 is rather uncertain.

Two other dedications are to Zeus and Hera *Soteres*. The first one is an ex-voto of a thiasos θεο[ῖς Διὶ καὶ] Ἥρα(ι) Σωτῆρ[σ]ιν (*CIRB* 76; AD 82). It is inscribed on a marble stele decorated with a gable, showing a bust of Zeus with a scepter. The fact that Hera was not depicted on the relief reflects her subordinate position in the cult of the thiasos. The composition of the thiasos' magistrates is normal for Bosporan cult associations (below, 2.1.2), but its almost purely Greco-Roman membership is unusual for the Roman Bosporus. This classical-style dedication of the Panticapaeum nobility looks rather alien in relation to other Bosporan monuments.

The latter remark can in no way refer to the impressive eighty-line dedication of the Panticapaeum elite to *theoi epouranioi* Zeus *Soter* and Hera *Soteira*, inscribed on a marble statue base, which was itself decorated with a relief showing two badly obliterated busts, separated by a column (*CIRB* 36, the 70's of the third century AD):

> . . . . θεοῖς ἐπουραν[ί]οις Διὶ Σωτῆρι καὶ Ἥρᾳ Σωτείρᾳ ὑπὲρ| βασιλέως Τειράνου νείκης καὶ αἰωνί[ου] διαμονῆς καὶ Αἰλίας βασιλίσσης| ἀνέστησαν τὸν τελαμῶνα [οἱ ἀρι] στοπυλεῖται τοῖς ἰδίοις θεοῖς καὶ εὐ|εργέταις, ἱερατεύοντος Ἰουλ(ίου) Χοφά[ρ]νου Ἀφροδεισίου πρὶν λοχα[γο]ῦ,| καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀριστοπυλεῖται· . . . .

> . . . to the celestial gods, Zeus *Soter* and Hera *Soteira*, for the victory and longevity of King Teiranos and Queen Ailia *aristopyleitai* set up this monument to their gods and benefactors: the priest Iulios Chopharnes son of Aphrodisios, former *lochagos*, and the remaining *aristopyleitai* . . .

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[18] Minns (1913: 619) suggested reading μ]εδεού[σῃ νεωρίων, that is, "to the Mistress of Dockyards," which sounds rather implausible. There are no parallels to such a usage, and Artemis, who could be associated with the aquatic element (e.g., above, 1.1.1.3), is nevertheless absolutely foreign to commerce and crafts.

The rest of the inscription is a long list of high military and civil officials, such as ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς Θεοδοσίας, χειλιάρχης, ἀρχιγραμματεύς, etc., followed by names of other ἀριστοπυλεῖται, courtiers (above, 0.2), without indication of their rank. The dedication testifies that King Teiranos and his adherents had been exposed to great danger (Gaydukevich 1949: 453; Gajdukevič 1971: 471).

Zeus and Hera *Soteres* had been worshipped on the Bosporus at least since the first century AD: as a couple, they received the dedication of a thiasos (*CIRB* 76); an altar, a χαριστήριον to Zeus *Soter*, was also set up in Myrmecaeum in the first century AD (*CIRB* 868);[19] the absence of Hera in this dedication again demonstrates that she played a secondary role in the couple. In two instances Zeus and Hera *Soteres* were offered gratitude for some grace: *CIRB* 76 was set up ἐπὶ [τὴν] εὐχήν; *CIRB* 868 was described as a "thanks-offering." In *CIRB* 36, the royal court probably addressed a plea to Zeus and Hera *Soteres* because only from them could salvation in a desperate situation be expected; the monument could have been erected as an expression of gratitude for the help that had already been received, but the absence of a direct statement to this effect makes the first possibility more likely.

The description of Zeus *Soter* and Hera *Soteira* as *theoi epouranioi* is remarkable: the adjective *epouranios* is usual in Christian inscriptions, but occurs in pagan contexts only rarely, and then is applied to Oriental gods.[20] The appearance of this epithet on the Bosporus might be due to the overall "celestial orientation" of the Bosporus' most venerated deities, *Theos Hypsistos* and Aphrodite *Ourania*. However, the Bosporan *theoi epouranioi* Zeus *Soter* and Hera *Soteira* are not identical to *Theos Hypsistos* and Aphrodite *Ourania*,[21] who had never been worshipped as a couple. Moreover, Aphrodite *Ourania* was too important a goddess to play the secondary role in the couple and to be mentioned only from time to time, as Hera *Soteira* was.

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[19] To the second–first century BC belongs an architectural fragment with an inscription: [Σω]τῆρος (*CIRB* 824). There are also five fourth-century BC graffiti with the dedication Διὸς Σωτῆρος (Tolstoy 1953: Nos. 160, 161; Boltunova 1966: 30; 1977: 177, 181).

[20] A Galatian inscription (third century AD) is addressed τῷ μεγάλῳ θεῷ Ὑψίστῳ και Ἐπουρανίῳ (Mitchell 1995, 2: 46). In Antaradus (Phoenicia) an altar was dedicated [θε]ῷ ὑψίστῳ οὐρανίῳ [. . . Μί]θρᾳ (Schürer 1897: 213). A dedication from Kafer Djezzin, in the vicinity of Byblos, addressed to Jupiter *Heliopolitanus*, whose cult in that place revealed patent solar features, described the god as *epouranios* (Servais-Soyez 1986: 349).

[21] Contrary to Rostovtzev's hint (1913: 29) and Boltunova's (1966: 37) explicit opinion that they were identical.

Finally, in AD 105 a lady freed a slave raised in her house (θρεπτός), in the form of the dedication of the freeman Διεὶ καὶ Ἥρᾳ Κυλειδῶν (*CIRB* 1021; from the village of Zaporozhskaya, in the northwestern Taman). *Cyleidai* were probably a noble Bosporan family, worshipping Zeus and Hera as their patrons (comm. to *CIRB* 1021; Boltunova 1966: 36).

Thus, Hera appeared on the Bosporus only thrice, mostly in dedications set up in extraordinary circumstances, and in all the cases simply as Zeus' spouse; once a dedication to Zeus *Soter* failed even to mention her. There is not a single dedication to Hera alone in Bosporan epigraphy. This goddess, clearly subordinate to her husband, could not compete with the majestic Aphrodite *Ourania*, honored in her own right all over the kingdom.

According to another manumission (*CIRB* 74, second century AD), a home-raised female slave was donated (θ)εᾳ τῷ Μᾶς(?) καὶ Παρ(θ)ένου.[22] It is not entirely clear whether Ma and Parthenos were distinct deities or one goddess, Ma-Parthenos. Ma was worshipped in two places called Comana, in the Pontus and in Cappadocia (Strabo 12.3.32; T. Reinach 1895: 238–240; Helck 1971: 243–244; Olshausen 1990: 1886), and identified with Rhea and *Meter Theon*[23] (T. Reinach 1895: 238; Lur'ye 1948: 205), known also on the Bosporus (above, 1.1.4). The cult of *Parthenos* was prominent in Chersonesus (above, 1.2.3.1), but might exist also on the Bosporus, since one of the minor towns there bore the name Parthenium. In any case, this manumission does not warrant identification of "the Goddess" of the inscriptions from Phanagoria (*CIRB* 1005; 976) with Ma (Lur'ye 1948).[24]

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[22] Reading suggested by Lur'ye (1948) and adopted by *CIRB*; cf. mysterious *hapax legomenon* goddess ΤΗΣΜΑΣ, postulated by Calderini (1908: 113) and Frye (*CIJ* No. 65a). Lur'ye cites convincing evidence in favor of his reading, which implies a grammatical mistake (an abnormal genitive case), that was rather widespread. The entire inscription is full of grammatical inconsistencies and spelling errors.

[23] Steph. Byz., s.v. Μάσταυρα· ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ καὶ ἡ Ῥέα Μᾶ.

[24] Strabo (12.3.36) compares Comana to Corinth (μικρὰ Κόρινθός ἐστιν ἡ πόλις) because crowds of prostitutes, consecrated to the goddesses, attracted foreigners to both towns. Corinthian *hetairai* served Aphrodite, and those of Comana belonged to Ma. The two goddesses had thus some common features, temple prostitution being sacred to both of them. (For a different approach, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 124–125). This resemblance alone certainly does not imply an association of Ma with Aphrodite on the Bosporus.

Ge appeared in the standard formulae of manumissions, ὑπὸ Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον (*CIRB* 74; 1123; 1126), which do not attest to any real cult, since the latter two documents were even issued by Jews (below, 2.2.3.1).

Moira (*CIRB* 130, 139), Maia (*CIRB* 142), Kore (*CIRB* 130) and Mousai (*CIRB* 130, 144, 144) are mentioned in versified epitaphs, and belong rather to the realm of Greek poetry and conventional metaphors, than to cult.[25]

In summary, while the Bosporan dedications of the sixth–first centuries BC attest to full-blooded real cults of a number of goddesses, Aphrodite *Ourania* being only the most popular among them, Bosporan epigraphy of the first centuries AD produces a strong impression of the total domination by Aphrodite. Hera, worshipped only together with Zeus, cannot compete with Aphrodite; as to the single mention of Artemis, its reliability is questionable; Ma-Parthenos appears only once, and also in a rather strange context; mentions of Ge in standard juridical formula even by Jews, and of Moirae and Muses in epitaphs, do not reflect the existence of a cult in a proper sense. Hence "the Goddess" of the two Phanagorian inscriptions was beyond doubt Aphrodite *Ourania.* Aphrodite enjoyed the worship of royal devotees, as well as of ordinary Bosporans; her temple (or temples) possessed land and serfs. On the whole, as far as epigraphy is concerned, she was the tutelary and almost the only goddess of the Bosporan kingdom in the first centuries AD.

The reason for this development is to be sought in the general Iranization of the Bosporus. On the one hand, Scythians, Maeotians and Sarmatians, penetrating the Bosporan cities, brought with them the cult of the local Great Goddess, whom they themselves identified with Aphrodite, as did the Greeks. On the other hand, the Persian founders of the Bosporan royal dynasty came from the Kingdom of Pontus, where Anaitis (Anahita) was venerated in the famous temple states, in Zela and elsewhere (Strabo 11.8.4; 12.3.37; 15.3.15; cf. T. Reinach 1895: 242; Raditsa 1983: 109). Beliefs of the royal court must have had a certain impact, which was facilitated by the proximity of Anahita and the Scytho-Maeotian Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania.*

Greek Aphrodite was indeed worshipped as a guardian of magistrates, both civic and military (Sokolowski 1964; Croissant and Salviat

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[25] However, for Kore see below, 1.3.2.7.

1966; Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 403–408),[26] and even as a guide of a whole city: in Athens in 230 BC the Boule set up a dedication to Aphrodite Ἡγεμόνη τοῦ Δήμου (*IG* II^2 2798; cf. Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 39), on Thasos and on Delos during the third–first centuries BC different bodies of officials offered inscriptions to Aphrodite (Sokolowski 1964: 2; Croissant and Salviat 1966: 468–469; Bruneau 1970: 344–345).[27] But in all these instances Aphrodite was not the only deity worshipped by the civic community, while on the Bosporus of the first centuries AD Aphrodite was venerated κατ' ἐξοχήν, the majority of all the dedications addressed to her.[28] The apparent predilection of the late Bosporan kings for Aphrodite differs also from the preceding period, when the rulers from the Spartocid dynasty offered inscriptions not only to Aphrodite, but also to Apollo (*CIRB* 25) and Zeus (*CIRB* 29). Therefore the changes of the Roman period evolved not as a further development of the Greek cult of Aphrodite, but rather under the influence of the local worship of Argimpasa and similar goddesses, the grantors of royal power and the guardians of kings.

1.3.2 *Archaeology and Iconography*

1.3.2.1 *Coinage of the First–Third Centuries AD*

A bust of the same goddess wearing a calathus, a diadem or a turreted crown was depicted on the coins of the Roman Bosporus, both of Caesaria (former Panticapaeum) and of Agrippia (former Phanagoria), beginning with the time of Augustus, and later under Cotys I

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[26] Sokolowski (1964: 6) explains this function of the goddess as an expression of her ability to keep opposite elements together and thus promote *homonoia* inside the collegia and in the civic communities as a whole, as well as to inspire "the army, both the commanders and rank and file, to cooperate harmoniously." Pirenne-Delforge (1994: 446–450) also assigned Aphrodite's role as a guardian of magistrates to *peitho* and *charis*, which she was believed to bestow upon the polis. However, guidance of the civic community and especially expertise in military affairs could have been inherited by Greek Aphrodite from her power-endowing belligerent Oriental counterparts.

[27] For a survey of these and other dedications of Greek magistrates to Aphrodite see: Pirenne-Delforge 1994: 402–406.

[28] In fact, to the dedications to Zeus and Hera, and Artemis, listed above, one should add the dedications to Apollo (*CIRB* 1239), Asclepius (*CIRB* 957), θεοῖς νεικοφόροις (*CIRB* 32), Θεῶι βροντῶντι ἐπηκόωι (*CIRB* 942), and Θεῷ δικαίῳ (*CIRB* 1116).

(AD 45/6–67/8), Rhescouporis I (AD 68–91/2) Sauromates I (AD 93/4–123/4), Cotys II (AD 123/4–132/3), and Eupator II (AD 154/5–173?). Since the late second century AD the goddess has been portrayed seated. During the first–third centuries AD this goddess and Nike[29] were the only two goddesses portrayed on Bosporan coins (Kharko 1950: 200).

The obverse of these coins normally features a portrait of a Bosporan king, either mounted or seated on the throne, and sometimes his bust (Frolova 1979: passim; Anokhin 1989: passim; Rostovtzev 1913: 22). The reverse, beginning from the reign of Gepaepyris, Aspourgos' widow (AD 37/38–38/39), usually features a bust of a goddess wearing a calathus (Rostovtzev 1913: 27, pl. 4. 10; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 326, 347, 373, 374, 414, 420, 433; Frolova 1979: pls. 1: 22–25; 7: 24–28, 8: 11; 28: 27–29). Sometimes there are two busts, one of them a man in a radiate crown, the other a goddess wearing a turreted crown, who in the Bosporan kingdom could be only Aphrodite *Ourania* (Rostovtzev 1913: 27; Frolova 1971: 68, pl. 7: 10).[30] Since Sauromates II (AD 173/4–210/1), the goddess has been portrayed seated on a high throne with arms carved in the form of lion or griffin paws, wearing a turreted crown or a calathus, holding a sphere (round vessel? apple or pomegranate?) or a patera in her right hand and a long scepter in her left (plate 12: 9–11; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 616, 616a, 617, 622, 623, 648, 650, 661, 662, 664, 673, 678, 679, 681, 683–686; Frolova 1979: pls. 38: 11–25; 39: 1–27; 40: 1–5; 42: 27–30; 43: 20–26; 44: 9–12, 16; 53: 24–38; 54: 2–7; 56: 32–39; 57: 1–2, 8–30; 58: 1–2; 59: 16, 20–21; 60: 30–38; 61: 1–5; 63: 16–26). Near the goddess there is usually a star. Sometimes she is depicted alone and without attributes, but on several types Eros faces her (Rostovtzev 1913: 27; pl. 4: 13–15; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 624, 627; Frolova 1979: pls. 43: 16–17, 19–26).

On the coins of a city that bore her name, Ouranopolis in Macedonia, Aphrodite *Ourania* was represented in a similar manner, seated on a throne, holding a scepter crowned with a radiating sun disc, which symbolized the celestial sphere, and wearing headgear decorated with a star (Lederer 1931: 47–53). Hence such elements as the scepter, as well as solar and astral symbols, that appear on the Bosporan coins, belong to the common Hellenistic repertory. On the other hand, the shape of the throne on the Bosporan coins recalls the goddess' function as *Potnia theron*, the turreted crown emphasizes her powers as the state and city goddess, and the patera indicates her connection with the local tradition of representing the goddess with a round vessel in her hand. Thus, Aphrodite *Ourania* of Ouranopolis was a celestial queen only, while Aphrodite *Ourania* as portrayed on the Bosporan coins reigned over the entire Universe, and was the sky deity, the giver of power and the mistress of the animal world.

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[29] Interestingly, Nike is sometimes portrayed wearing a barbaric pointed hat (plate 12.8). Cf. the "classical" variant: plate 12: 3.

[30] As to the second bust, it might represent either a solar deity or a deified king, according to Rostovtzev (1913: 27), or just a king, according to Frolova (1971: 68).

Almost identical to some Bosporan coin types is a gold medallion (plate 12: 12), found in the Kuban area (Tolstoy and Kondakov 1889: 45, fig. 32; Rostovtzev 1913: 28, pl. 2: 3; Kharko 1946: 139; Ivanova 1954: 244; Artamonov 1961: fig. 8), showing Aphrodite with a high headdress, resembling the one on the Karagodeouashkh plate, and holding a sphere and a patera. The goddess sits on a throne, its legs shaped in the form of Erotes. Aphrodite with two Erotes appears very frequently on gold pendants from the Bosporan tombs, especially in the first-second centuries AD (Rostovtzev 1913: 28; 1.1.1.6).

The new coinage type representing the seated Aphrodite, which appeared under Sauromates II, probably commemorated the erection of a new cult statue of the goddess, or the restoration of an existing one (Kharko 1946: 139; 1950: 201); in fact, such a statue presumably had already been copied in various media in the fourth century BC (above, 1.1.1.6). In any case, such an enterprise would be most fitting as part of large-scale restoration works intended to honor Aphrodite, carried out in the second century AD.

On some later coin types, where Aphrodite is not depicted, the portraits of a Bosporan king or a Roman emperor appear with the representation of a sphere, one of the solar symbols of Aphrodite *Ourania* (Frolova 1986: 210–211; cf. Lederer 1931: 54).

The goddess represented on the Bosporan coins was certainly Aphrodite *Ourania*, who reigned in the pantheon of Roman Bosporus. The fact that she was always represented on the reverse, the obverse bearing a portrait of the king, and sometimes probably even on the same side with the king, who claimed divine origin, indicates that she was conceived as a patroness not just of the kingdom, but first and foremost of the king personally (Rostovtzev 1913: 27).

On a number of Bosporan bronze coin types, issued by Cotys II[31] (AD 123–132) and Eupator II (AD 154–173), a five-column temple is shown (plate 12: 1; Burachkov 1884: 262; Nos. 189; 213; 214; Zograf 1951: pls. 47: 17; 48: 4). The representation of the temple is accompanied by the inscription KA-ΠE, unanimously interpreted as an abbreviation of ΚΑΠΕΤΟΛΙΟΝ (Blavatskiy 1964: 62). Therefore, the temple was declared as belonging to Jupiter Capitolinus (Head 1911: 505; Minns 1913: pl. 8: 5). Kharko (1946: 140; 1950) was the first to question this opinion, arguing that there was no evidence of the existence of a Jupiter Capitolinus temple on the Bosporus. The five-column temple in no way resembles the Roman temple of Jupiter, with six columns before the fire of AD 69 (Blavatskiy 1964a: 162), and four columns after its restoration by Domitian (Kharko 1950: 197). The word "Capitol" was widely used outside Rome to designate the acropolis, where not only Roman, but also other gods had their temples (Kharko 1950: 197–198). The Bosporan coin type was unique not only on the Bosporus, but also in the Northern Black Sea littoral as a whole (Kharko 1950: 199). It therefore probably commemorated some extraordinary event in the life of the country, connected with the depicted temple.

On a stele discussed below (1.3.2.2), Eros and, presumably, Aphrodite, are depicted in front of a five-column temple, which must have belonged to Aphrodite. In the second century AD Bosporan rulers were busy restoring the sanctuaries of Aphrodite on the Asiatic side. This project is likely to have included the rebuilding of the temple, which was commemorated in the discussed coin issues (Kharko 1950: 201). As the five-column facade was rare in Roman architecture, it may be suggested that the new temple repeated the old plan (Kharko 1950: 202). In any case, the particularity of this design makes it plausible that the temple shown on the coins is the one represented on the stele, and hence it belonged to Aphrodite.[32]

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[31] Karyshkovskiy (1953) and Blavatskiy (1964a: 161) suggest that this type be related to Cotys I (AD 45/6–67?). This attribution was adopted by Frolova (1979: 34). Anokhin (1989: 153; pl. 14: 370–372) ascribes coins with the five-column temple to Rhescouporis I (AD 68/69–91/92).

[32] The suggestion of Kharko, then still unpublished, has been already accepted by Gaydukevich (1949: 376). Blavatskiy (1964a: 162–163) agreed that the five-column design was an exception in Mediterranean architecture, and that the representation

1.3.2.2 *Communion with the Goddess*

The just-mentioned stele was found in Kerch (plate 13; *KW*: pl. 28, fig. 407; *AGSP* pl. 92: 3); it was interpreted by Kharko (1950: 203–205) as representing a temple of Aphrodite *Ourania* and a scene taking place in front of it. The stele was dated by Kieseritzky and Watzinger (*KW*, comm. to fig. 407), Blavatskiy (1964a: 162), and Sokol'skiy (1978: 130) to the second century BC. However, the date suggested by Kharko (1950: 205) and accepted by Ivanova (1961: 54, 141), late first–early second century AD, is much better grounded, both from the point of view of the artistic style of the monument, and its comparison with numismatic material (Kharko 1950).

Unfortunately, the stele is broken, and its lower part which may have contained an inscription is not preserved; therefore the unanimous opinion that the stele is actually a gravestone seems not absolutely certain. The surface of the extant part is divided into two registers. The upper one shows a five-column Ionic temple, its gable decorated with the bust of a goddess; round shields hang in all four spaces between the columns, and above the cornice are two large rosettes. The lower register is flanked on both sides by exactly the same columns as those of the temple above; alongside one of the columns there is a small herm, representing a female deity. A warrior stands near a small altar or a low column with a purification vessel on it, a patera in his right hand. The position of his left hand, which is broken, indicates that it held a spear. A small figure of a winged Nike places a crown on his head.[33] To the right of the altar a woman dressed in a chiton and a himation, which covers her head, holds a long scepter in her left hand and a round object, now broken, in her right hand. Above her right shoulder a small figure of Eros is shown, relating the whole scene to the cult of Aphrodite. The herm depicted on the stele is reminiscent of the real herm of Aphrodite, *CIRB* 1111.

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on the coin was modeled on a local building, but nevertheless maintained that the temple shown on the coins was a hypothetical Bosporan Capitoleion, built in order to express loyalty to Rome. However, this approach, adopted by Kruglikova (1966: 33), seems very unconvincing, since there is not a single hint as to the existence of such a temple, and the temple of Aphrodite on the stele discussed below perfectly matches the temple depicted on the coins.

[33] Nike with a wreath in her hand occurs very frequently on Bosporan coins: e.g. Frolova 1979: pls. 2: 9, 10, 12; 3: 17, 18, 20; 4: 17, 19, etc.

Representations of gables are rather infrequent in Bosporan art: there are only eight;[34] the depiction of a whole temple is unique. The composition of the relief is supposed to communicate the idea that the scene in the lower register takes place in front of the temple. A warrior, or more likely a general, performs a libation in front of the temple of the goddess, who had granted him the victories that entitled Nike to crown him. The female figure with Eros above her shoulder standing near the general is certainly not "his wife in the guise of Aphrodite" (*KW*, comm. to fig. 407), and maybe not even "a priestess with the attributes of the goddess, performing her duties in front of the temple" (Kharko 1950: 203), but Aphrodite herself: the presence of two other divine beings, Nike and Eros, presumably translocates the scene into the divine world, therefore conveying deification of the main hero, the general. If in fact the woman is Aphrodite, or even her priestess substituting for the goddess, the scene in the lower register of the stele is to be compared to the scenes representing the communion between the goddess and a deified king or aristocrat on objects from the indigenous Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian complexes.

The temple in the upper register belongs to Aphrodite (Kharko 1950: 204).[35] Kharko compared the bust of the goddess with a medallion from the Tolstoy collection (plate 12: 12). The discovery in 1965 (Sokol'skiy 1978: 128) of the Hellenistic stele, representing a gable with a bust of Aphrodite flanked by two Erotes (plate 5. 1), corroborates the identification of the temple. The bust shown in the gable of the temple may either have decorated a genuine tympanum of a temple of Aphrodite, or represented part of a cult statue, that in reality was placed inside the temple (Kharko 1950: 205). Numerous representations of the seated goddess on Bosporan coins of the Roman period and in other media make this possibility very likely.

The shields hanging between the columns may be an offering of the general seen in the lower register (Kharko 1950: 205). In any case, this decoration of the temple, together with the thanksgiving for the military victories addressed to Aphrodite, clearly indicates the war-like nature of this goddess, which was not apparent in the Hellenistic evidence from the Bosporus. Greek-style cults of Aphrodite elsewhere indeed included her worship as a grantor of success in the battlefield (above, 1.1.1.6).[36] However, as on the Bosporus this aspect of her cult became most prominent only in the first centuries AD, after its unprecedented exposure to the influence of the local beliefs, the change must be due to the bellicosity of the indigenous Great Goddess, associated with Aphrodite *Ourania*. This development was probably reinforced by the impact of the Anahita cult in the Pontus.

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[34] Seven of them are listed by Sokol'skiy (1978: 129–131). Besides the present stele, they represent: Aphrodite *Ourania* and Aphrodite (above, 1.1.1.6); Zeus *Soter* (above, 1.3.1.2); Hermes (Ivanova 1961: 103–104); and Aphrodite *Ourania* or a deity closely related to her (below, 1.3.2.3). To these a recently discovered gabled stele, presumably attesting the cult of Aphrodite *Apatouros*, is to be added (below, 1.3.2.3).

[35] And certainly not to Demeter (*KW*: comm. to fig. 407; Rostovtzev 1911: 149–150).

The same process also brought in a new motif: scenes of communion between the goddess and a deified mortal. Although they were widely spread in the indigenous art, they did not appear on the monuments from the Greek cities of the Bosporus during the earlier periods, while heroization of private persons existed and is alluded to in several metric inscriptions: *CIRB* 119, 124, and 130 (first century BC–early first century AD).[37] The imagery of these poems, conveying in general terms the idea of heroic immortality, is purely Greek. Representations of the deified mortal together with the goddess penetrated Bosporan art only in the Roman period, alongside other elements of the indigenous culture.[38]

The scene of communion with Aphrodite, represented on the stele with the five-column temple, is not unique in Bosporan art. The gravestone of Agathous, son of Sacles, grandson of Ortycas, listing the major military and civic offices that Sacles had occupied, was erected in AD 179 in Phanagoria by a son of Agathous (plate 14; *CIRB* 1000). There are two registers on its obverse side.[39] In the lower are two horsemen, the left one bearded, with a *gorytos* on his hip, a round object under his horse probably representing an enemy's head, while the right one is beardless, and holds a spear(?) in his hand. These are presumably Agathous and his father, whose high position is praised in the inscription (Kobylina 1948: 86). However, as Sacles is presented so majestically that he seems deified, the scene turns into a communion between the deceased and his heroic ancestor.[40]

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[36] For the Roman cult of Venus *Victrix* see Speidel 1984.

[37] For the deification of private persons in general see: Wrede 1981. I owe this reference to the kindness of Elisheva German.

[38] This phenomenon is to be distinguished from the deification of private persons, which spread in Macedonia in the same period (Wrede 1981: 54–63). In Macedonia the range of deities to whom mortals were compared was very wide, and all the gods were Greek only (Wrede 1981: 55). On the Bosporus the range was reduced to two main gods, to a great extent non-Greek, that of Aphrodite *Ourania* and her male companion.

[39] A badly obliterated relief, depicting two horsemen, decorates the reverse side, where traces of a shaved-off inscription are also visible.

The upper register shows a man reclining on a couch, holding grapes in one hand and a cup in the other. To the right of the couch stands a male servant, and to the left a female servant performs a libation on a low altar. A female figure *en face* sits to the left of the couch, her chair placed on a base, like a statue. Another boy stands to the left of the base.

A seated woman and a man, either standing or mounted, are frequently represented on Bosporan gravestones (Ivanova 1951a: 30–31), but the woman is normally represented in profile or in three-quarters, and her armchair is not raised on a base. The en face attitude is unusual on Bosporan gravestones, but typical of representations of goddesses, for instance on the Merdzhany (plate 11) and the Karagodeouashkh (plate 9) plates (Ivanova 1951a: 30). This posture, combined with the depiction of the seated woman on a base, her patera, her garments, and especially her headdress resembling that of the Karagodeouashkh goddess, suggest that the figure represents not a mortal woman, but a goddess, Aphrodite *Ourania*, welcoming Agathous, who feasts in her presence. Thus, Agathous is met by two divinities: his deified father and Aphrodite.

Another Bosporan stele depicts in its upper register a seated woman and a horseman and in the lower register an en face female figure holding a circular object, which might be a sphere or a ritual vessel. She sits on a throne, resembling the throne of the Merdzhany goddess even in minor details (cf. Blavatskiy 1964b: 4. 33). The stele is broken, so neither the bottom of the lower relief nor an inscription is extant. However, it is likely that the figure in the lower register was intended to portray Aphrodite (Ivanova 1951a).

A fresco from the first-century AD[41] Panticapaeum vault of Anthesterios (plate 19; *ADZh* 170–182; pl. 51; Gaydukevich 1949: 402–405) represents the same subject: a horseman approaches a woman, sitting on an armchair of exactly the same construction as the one just mentioned. The woman is shown en face, two attendants standing by her side. Near the woman a yurt is painted with great deliberation, and immediately beyond the yurt there is a tree with a *gorytos* hanging on it. A long spear joins the tree to the yurt. The realism of the painting (Ivanova 1953: 153) does not conceal the cultic significance of the scene,[42] representing the post mortem communion of the horseman with the goddess (Ivanova 1954: 159; Yatzenko 1995). Moreover, this fresco might imply an additional nuance: the *gorytos* on the tree, certainly the Tree of Life, linked to the yurt, if indeed the hanging *gorytos* was still considered a symbol of a sexual union (above, 1.2.3.5), means that the idea of *hieros gamos* of the deified dead with the goddess was valid on the Bosporus in the first centuries AD.

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[40] For a composition representing two horsemen facing each other, see below, 2.4.2.1.

[41] The vault was dated to late first century BC–early first century AD by Rostovtzev (*ADZh* 182), and to the first–early second century AD by Ivanova (1953: 152).

It is to be observed also that compositions engraved on Bosporan gravestones and featuring a seated woman and a man, obviously emphasize the hieratically stiff imposing figure of the woman (Artamonov 1961: 65). Epitaphs incised on a number of such tombstones mention male names only (*KW* Nos. 655; 657; 664; 666). Therefore, women might have represented the goddess (Ivanova 1951b: 32).

Thus, Bosporan Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* acquired the aspect of the patroness of the dead in the nether world, which had been only vaguely attested in her Greek cult prior to the first century AD. It was evident in the Scytho-Maeotian cult, and penetrated the religion of the hellenized Bosporan cities only after the cultural changes of the first century BC–the early first century AD, with the overall barbarization of the Bosporus. Moreover, the idea of the communion between the deified[43] dead and the goddess, possibly conceived even in marital terms, is conveyed by a number of monuments. However, this idea might be a development of the notion of the union between Aphrodite *Ourania* and a god, to whom the mortal could have been equated in his apotheosis. Not only kings, but also eminent aristocrats (Anthesterios, Agathous, the general of the stele with the five-column temple) earned this honor.

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[42] Rostovtzev defined it as a scene of the funeral feast (*ADZh* 172).

[43] For the association of the deceased with the rider god see Gaydukevich 1949: 388.

1.3.2.3 *Aphrodite of Tanais*

Representation of a goddess on a gable, very similar to that on the stele with the five-column temple, crowns an AD 229 building inscription from Tanais (plate 15: 3; Boltunova 1968, 1991; Shelov 1972: 281). The initial inscription, to which the relief belonged, was obliterated, and overwritten with a secondary inscription, commemorating the reconstruction of the city walls and a gate, which indicates that the relief must be considerably earlier than the building inscription. The goddess, whose face with its characteristic local ethnic traits resembles portraits of Bosporan women on their gravestones, wears a chiton and a calathus, and lacks any further attributes. Boltunova (1968: 55) supposed that this was the local Great Goddess, who was called Aphrodite *Ourania* by the Greeks; this opposition of "local" and "Greek" beliefs in Tanais of the first centuries AD is somewhat artificial; therefore, the goddess may be identified as just Aphrodite *Ourania* (Shelov 1972: 281).

This suggestion finds a confirmation in a recently discovered fragment of a gabled stele, on which letters . . . ΟΥΡΟΥ . . . are preserved (Arsen'yeva, Böttger and Vinogradov 1996: fig. 7). This monument still awaits a detailed publication, but it may already be supposed that the stele is related to the cult of Aphrodite *Apatouros*.

The cult of Aphrodite *Ourania* in Tanais is testified by another relief, regrettably broken (plate 15: 1; Boltunova 1991). The extant part shows a goddess sitting on an armchair, wearing a chiton and a himation that covers her calathus and her shoulders; in both hands she holds fish,[44] reminiscent of Atargatis-Derceto of Ascalon, of the Colchian Leucothea, and of the helmeted goddess, so-called Athena, who was represented with fish on the pendants from Scytho-Maeotian tombs. This association might have also guided Jamblichus (Δραματικόν 9), cited by Photius (*Bibliotheca* Cod. 94 Bekker 75b):

> Ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὰ περὶ Φαρνούχου καὶ Φαρσίριδος καὶ Τανάιδος, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ Τάναις ὁ ποταμός, λεπτομερῶς διεξέρχεται, καὶ ὅτι τὰ περὶ τὸν τόπον καὶ τὴν χώραν τοῦ Τανάιδος τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν Ἀφροδίτης μυστήρια Τανάιδος καὶ Φαρσίριδός εἰσιν.

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[44] Fish and sea monsters occurred on a series of objects of Sarmatian art: Treister 1994: 191–194, figs. 2, 4, 12.

> In the same place stories about Pharnouchos, and Pharsiris, and Tanais, who gave his name to the river Tanais, are recounted in minor details, and that the mysteries of Aphrodite, that are celebrated by the people living in the place and its vicinity, are in honor of Tanais and Pharsiris.

Jamblichus recalls Aphrodite of Tanais, when he speaks about a Mesopotamian sanctuary of a goddess, who is also identified by the Greeks as Aphrodite. He relates the cult of Aphrodite in Tanais to the cult of the river Tanais, which might account for fish as an attribute of Aphrodite, and hints at Aphrodite's possible connection with the snake-limbed goddess and with her river-father. Aphrodite of Tanais, depicted with fish and celebrated together with the river-god, is reminiscent of the aquatic aspect of Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*. Kobylina identified the Tanais goddess holding fishes with Anahita (1978: 26).

In fact, several ancient writers identified Aphrodite of Tanais with Aphrodite-Anaitis, as Vollgraff (1949: 70–72) has demonstrated. Strabo (11.14.16) states:

> Ἅπαντα μὲν οὖν τὰ τῶν Περσῶν ἱερὰ καὶ Μῆδοι καὶ Ἀρμένιοι τετιμήκασι, τὰ δὲ τῆς Ταναϊδος διαφερόντως Ἀρμένιοι ἐν τε ἄλλοις ἱδρυσάμενοι τόποις, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀκιλισηνῇ.
>
> Now the sacred rites of the Persians, one and all, are held in honor by both the Medes and the Armenians; but those of Tanais are held in exceptional honor by the Armenians, who have built temples in her honor in different places, especially in Acilisene (Translation by H. L. Jones)

The editors of the *Geography* unanimously correct Ταναϊδος of the manuscripts for Ἀναΐτιδος. However, the *Epitome Palatina* of Strabo preserves the traditional reading:

> ὅτι ἐν Ακιλισηνῇ τῆς Ἀρμενίας τιμᾶται ἡ Ταναῖτις θεά
>
> ... in Acilisene the goddess Tanaitis is worshiped.

Eustathius, in his commentary on Dionysius Periegetes (839) records that:

> ... παρ' Ἀρμενίοις παρθένους ἐπιφανεῖς ἀνιερωθείσας θεᾷ τινι λεγομένῃ Ταναΐτιδι καταπορνεύεσθαι.
>
> ... in Armenia noble maidens who were dedicated to a certain goddess, named Tanaitis, prostitute themselves.

Finally, the manuscripts of *Exhortation* (5.58) of Clement of Alexandria, citing Berossus, report that Artaxerxes II made his subjects venerate the image of Aphrodite Tanais (τῆς ’Αφροδίτης Τανάιδος τὸ ἄγαλμα). Editors change Τανάιδος for ’Αναίτιδος, but Vollgraff (1949: 71) argues that Clement, writing a chapter on the influence of Persians, Scythians, and Sarmatians on Greek ideology, could not confuse Tanais and Anaitis, and that he had known about the mysteries of Aphrodite in Tanais.

It seems therefore that all these authors did not just confuse Anaitis and Tanais, but identified Aphrodite Anaitis with Aphrodite *Tanaitis*, thus emphasizing the local peculiarities of the cult of Aphrodite in the area. In any case, there is no doubt that Aphrodite of Tanais was very close to Anahita, which is most natural, taking into account the Iranian connections of the Scytho-Maeoto-Sarmatian goddess.

Vollgraff (1949: 70) suggests to modify the Jamblichus' text and to withdraw the words καὶ Φαρσίριδός, thus making the mysteries belong to Aphrodite of Tanais only. This conjecture seems ungrounded, since the Iranian Pharsiris, literally "with shining face," might have been a name or an epithet of a solar deity. Pharsiris is indeed a less graecized version of Parysatis (Strabo 16.4.27), and the name Pharnouchos was also known to Greeks (Her. 7.88; Aischyl. *Pers.* 313; Xen. *Cyr.* 6.3.32; 7.1.22; 8.6.7; cf. Wüst 1938: 1857; Vollgraff 1949: 69). Nevertheless, occurrences of these words as personal names do not warrant the hypersceptical attitude to Jamblichus' evidence, which considers it to be a romantic version of a local etiologic myth (Vollgraff 1949: 69), as well as the elimination of words from the text (see also below, 2.4.2.6).

One may think of ascribing tentative roles to the three deities, Pharnouchos, Pharsiris, and Tanais. Could Pharsiris be a great solar goddess and Tanais her aquatic avatar, the relations between them resembling those between Argimpasa-Aphrodite and the anguipede goddess? The name Pharnouchos is related to the *pharn*, one of the basic concepts in Iranian ideology, comprehending grace, power, happiness, and good luck. Pharnouchos might have been the paredrus of the goddess.

Aphrodite of Tanais has also had a chthonic aspect. In the necropoleis of Tanais, there are only a few instances of burials with anthropomorphic representations on the objects accompanying the deceased. One of them is urn No. 3 from the 1908 excavations (Knipovich 1949: 61–62, fig. 20), containing forty relief pendants, five medallions, two finger-rings, an earring, and a number of smaller objects, all made of gold. The subjects of representations are a male (Zeus? *Theos Hypsistos*?) bust, Nike, a bust of a woman with a tympanum (Cybele?), two busts of a goddess without attributes; and all the rest—depictions of Aphrodite with two Erotes behind her shoulders, executed with the same die, made on the Bosporus (Knipovich 1949: 62; cf. Gaydukevich 1940). Thus, either no images accompanied dead Tanaitai, or they were mostly Aphrodite and related deities.

1.3.2.4 *Other Representations of Goddesses in Sculpture*

The association of Aphrodite with the indigenous goddesses was however characteristic not only of Tanais, a far-away outpost of the Bosporus in the midst of local tribes, but is also attested by a remarkable Panticapaeum stele (Gajdukevič 1971: fig. 112), dated to the second century AD, which served as a gravestone. It was discovered in secondary use in a modern building, its reliefs badly obliterated. The depicted figures are discernible only along general lines (Shkorpil 1914: 19). The relief is divided into three registers. The lower one portrays a horseman with a spear in his raised right hand; in the middle register two men flank an object that Shkorpil described as "a tree or a thyrsus"; the upper part, in the form of a gable (plate 15: 2), contains a bust with raised hands, that are shaped as large leaves (Gaydukevich 1951: 210; Sokol'skiy 1978: 130).[45]

The lower relief is an example of the favorite subject of Bosporan gravestones of men, and therefore depicts the deceased. The middle register, with two symmetric male figures near an object symbolizing a tree, or a real tree, presumably represents the *ficus mundi* substituting for the Great Goddess, flanked by the divine twins. It may therefore be compared with the scene on the Karagodeouashkh plate, conveying the same notion. This interpretation is supported by the image in the gable, the vegetation goddess with raised leaf-shaped palms (plate 15: 2). This posture is analogous to the attitude of the goddesses sitting on lion-flanked thrones on the Scythian "earrings" (plate 8: 3). If the suggested origin of these "earrings" is indeed Bosporan, the relief on the stele was also modeled on the Bosporan cult-statue of a seated goddess with leaf-shaped raised hands, lions beside her throne. In any case, the goddess represented in the gable, as well as on the "earrings," was very close to Aphrodite *Ourania*. It is remarkable that the goddess is shown in the higher register, above the Tree of Life, as if crowning it, therefore reigning the universe.

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[45] Shkorpil (1914: 19) did not recognize this and suggested that the figure "holds locks of hair in her raised hands."

A first-century AD marble head of Aphrodite was discovered in Panticapaum (Blavatskiy 1964a: 181, fig. 54).[46] In Gorgippia two heads, belonging to broken marble statues of Aphrodite, were found. Both statues were imported to the Bosporus; one of them is dated to the first century AD, and the second to the second century AD (Kruglikova 1977: 54–55; 1987: 69).

In a second–third century AD vault at Nymphaeum three reliefs were discovered, portraying the heads of Silen and Pan and a bust of a helmeted goddess with a gorgoneion on her breast (*AGSP* pl. 97: 6–8; Ivanova 1954: fig. 65, 66). The latter has been identified as Athena (Ivanova 1954: 165; 1961: 63; Maximova and Nalivkina 1955: 315). However, Ivanova (1961: 63) felt uneasy about the "deliberate ugliness and frightening deformity" of these characters, and supposed that the Greek deities "merged with some local demons." Moreover, the gorgoneion, shown not as a decoration of the goddess's aegis, but as a large pendant, indicates that the artist was ignorant of the Hellenic mythological and iconographic tradition (Maximova and Nalivkina 1955: 315). On the other hand, a third–second century BC locally-made Bosporan terracotta portrays a seated goddess wearing a turreted crown and holding a phiale, with a pendant featuring Medusa's head on her breast (plate 2). Medusa in Bosporan and Northern Black Sea contexts is connected to the Great *Potnia theron*, Aphrodite *Ourania* (above, 1.2.3.4). As observed above, Athena was never really worshipped on the Bosporus, but in the beliefs of the indigenous population her image merged with the war-like local goddess, most probably Argimpasa. Pan and Silen did not belong to the realm of Greek Athena, but numerous representations of their heads, on pendants and in other media, were discovered together with artifacts depicting the anguipede goddess and Aphrodite *Ourania* (above, 1.2.3.1). Therefore the three reliefs reflect the cult of this goddess in its most cruel belligerent aspect, which is attested also by the stele with the five-column temple, by the dedication from Tanais (*CIRB* 1237), and especially by the Iluratum material (below, 1.3.2.8).

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[46] Her hair was probably decorated with pendants or other ornaments: there are numerous tiny orifices, some of them still containing lead bars, intended to hold these ornaments. The bars are too small to hold heavier articles, as for example bronze locks of hair. A marble head of a Bosporan king was also executed in this manner (Blavatskiy 1964a: 183).

A bronze third-century AD bust of Isis, discovered in Gorgoppia, combines the crown of the Egyptian goddess with an unusual hairdress, her hair combed upward instead of descending freely over her shoulders. As Roman empresses of the second–third centuries AD were frequently portrayed in a similar style, the bust was interpreted by Kruglikova (1971; cf. Kobylina 1978: 116, fig. on p. 147) either as a portrait of an empress in the guise of Isis, or as a representation of Isis-Aphrodite (Kruglikova 1977: 55; 1987: 69–70). In fact, in Gorgippia, where Aphrodite was worshipped as *Nauarchis*, the syncretism of Isis, the patroness of navigation, with Aphrodite is very plausible. Noteworthy, the name of Aphrodite occurs very frequently in the graffiti covering the wall painting from a Nymphaeum sanctuary, depicting a fleet, while the name of Isis is inscribed on the prow of the largest ship (N. L. Grach 1984: 82).[47]

Besides Aphrodite, only Cybele was represented on several monuments, but most of them relatively early, prior to the mid-first century AD. The Roman statue of Cybele (above, 1.1.4) from the Panticapaeum acropolis demonstrates that the Hellenistic temple continued to exist there. An extremely obliterated relief from Panticapaeum depicts Hermes with caduceus, a female figure, and between them a goddess[48] wearing a high polos, and holding a round object in her left hand (Shkorpil 1914: 17; Kobylina 1978: fig on p. 95). It is dated to the first century BC–early first century AD (Ivanova 1954: 250–251). The goddess on this relief was most probably also Cybele, since two well-preserved Bosporan reliefs (Marti 1934: 64–66, figs. 4, 5; Kobylina 1978: figs. on pp. 67–68), from Nymphaeum and Panticapaeum, show an almost identical composition: Hermes and Hekate (Marti

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[47] In Alexandria, one of the major trading partners of Gorgippia (Kruglikova 1977: 56), as well as on Delos (above, 1.1.1.3), images of Aphrodite and Isis merged. Figurines of a nude goddess with a sistrum decorating her head may serve as a good illustration of this tendency (*GGR* 2 631).

[48] Shkorpil maintained that it was a bearded god, Sabazios, and Ivanova (1954: 250–251) adopted this opinion, although she felt uneasy about the abnormal for Sabazius headgear and mirror. However, this figure is to be defined as Cybele: the contour lines are barely visible on the stone; the relief was discovered in the place where two dedications mentioning Cybele were found (*CIRB* 21, 23); and two reliefs with the same Hermes and Hekate show Cybele between them.

1934: 64–65; Ivanova 1954: 249) or Kore (Kobylina 1978: 12) with two torches stand on either sides of Cybele with a lion cub in her lap, holding a tympanon in her left hand and a patera in her right hand. Artistically these representations of Cybele are modeled on the famous statue of the goddess by Agoracritos (Ivanova 1954: 247). Their very good Greek-style workmanship makes it fairly certain that their date is not later than the early first century AD.[49] Two other reliefs show Cybele flanked by lions, with a lion cub on her knees (Ivanova 1954: 250). A fragment of a statue with a lion cub in the goddess's lap also belongs to a representation of Cybele (Shkorpil 1914: 20). However, the cult of Cybele, as reflected in this evidence, could not compete in popularity with the cult of Aphrodite even in the European Bosporus,[50] not to mention the Asiatic side, Aphrodite's stronghold from ancient times. Furthermore, the cult of Cybele on the Bosporus demonstrates no signs of syncretism with the local beliefs. Common traits that Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* shared with Cybele were allotted to the Bosporan goddess by the Scytho-Maeotian Great Mother, who had acquired them directly from Asia Minor, without Greek mediation.

1.3.2.5 *The Tendril-Limbed Goddess*

The earliest monument featuring a nude female torso with tendril-shaped legs, which was not found in a tumulus of a local nobleman, but might reflect the beliefs of the inhabitants of the Greek cities, is a late fourth-century BC carved and inlaid wooden sarcophagus, discovered in the Taman peninsula, near Corocondame (modern Tuzla, plate 15: 4). The tendril-limbed goddess is represented wearing a calathus (Ivanova 1951b: 188).

In the first centuries AD this motif became one of the most popular in the plaster decoration of wooden sarcophagi (plate 16; Minns 1913: fig. 277; Ivanova 1951b: 189; Ivanova 1955a: 423). The goddess' torso was usually winged, with her hands holding the acanthus tendrils of the legs (Minns 1913: fig. 276). The figures were sculpted in a rather schematic manner, but with a special emphasis on the breasts, characteristic of fertility goddesses. A large number of figures preserved considerable traces of bright colors—blue, red, and yellow—on their wings, acanthus leaves, etc. (Ivanova 1951b: 189). One winged tendril-limbed figure is shown flanked by two horses (Ivanova 1951b: 198), which immediately recall the aspect of *Potnia hippon* of the Scythian snake-legged goddess and Argimpasa (above, 1.2.3.4). The legs of the goddess were sometimes depicted quite naturalistically, as coiling snakes (plate 16), indicating that the ancestral mythological tradition was still vivid.

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[49] Ivanova (1954: 249) dated them to the first century BC–first century AD.

[50] Shkorpil's thesis (Škorpil 1913) on the predominance of Cybele there seems greatly exaggerated.

The same image was represented in monumental sculpture and architectural decoration. The best preserved example is a double-faced limestone sculpture (*AGSP* pl. 53: 6), found on the Mithridates mountain: a nude female torso with tendril-shaped legs is shown without wings, probably as a result of its being double-faced[51] (*KW* No. 155; Ivanova 1951b: 189–190). One face is much more eroded than the other, so the sculpture is likely to have served a part of the architectural decoration of a building (Ivanova 1951b: 193). Not far from where it had been found, fragments of another sculpture of the tendril-limbed goddess, numerous architectural details and a herm were also discovered (Ivanova 1951b: 191–193, figs. 2, 4). This herm of a goddess, which may be stylistically dated to the second century AD (Ivanova 1951b: 195) lacks any attributes, and was labeled as Demeter without specific reasons (Ivanova 1951b: 191). However, on the Bosporus Aphrodite *Ourania* was usually depicted in this form (1.1.1.2), and the discovery of the sculpture of the tendril-limbed goddess nearby might be another proof that the herm represents Aphrodite. As to the relief on the cornice, one of the fragments bears a male head with leaves instead of hair and a beard transformed into tendrils, hares and dogs running among them (Ivanova 1951b: fig. 4).[52] It might represent the head of a Silen-like creature (Ivanova 1951b: 191), this image accompanying the indigenous Aphrodite *Ourania* and the anguipede goddess. Unfortunately, it is not entirely clear if the two sculptures of the snake-limbed goddess, the cornice, and the herm were discovered within the city or in the necropolis of Panticapaeum; the archaeological methods of the 1880's do not even allow an unequivocal attribution of all the artifacts to the same complex (Ivanova 1951b: 193). However, all the architectural details discovered in this locality are executed in a very similar manner from the same sort of limestone. The herm is made of marble, but it need not have matched the architectural sculpture. Therefore it is quite possible, although in no way certain, that the architectural details and the herm belonged to a single complex. As to their chronology, the style of the architectural details and the sculptures of the tendril-limbed goddess date them to the first–second centuries AD (Ivanova 1951b: 195).

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[51] It was found headless; afterwards a head that stylistically fitted the figure was adjusted to it (Ivanova 1951: fig. 1); however, it later became clear that the fragments do not belong to the same statue (Ivanova 1951: 191).

[52] For a list of similar designs in Imperial art see Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950: 22.

A set of fragments from Panticapaum belongs to another tendril-limbed female figure (Ivanova 1951b: fig. 5), crowned with a sophisticated headdress formed from buds and acanthus leaves. It might have served as the decoration of a gravestone, at least judging by its dimensions (*KW* No. 153; Ivanova 1951b: 194). However, this figure was also double-faced, and the overwhelming majority of the Bosporan gravestones are single-faced (Ivanova 1951b: 194). The function of this first-century AD sculpture therefore remains unclear.

As already shown above (1.2.3.2), the motif of a female torso emerging from acanthus leaves is known elsewhere in the Aegean. However, on the Bosporus the figure was depicted not only as tendril-limbed, but also in the original snake-limbed pattern, unknown elsewhere. Thus, the device of the anguipede or tendril-limbed figure appeared under the influence of local beliefs and evolved out of the Northern Black Sea tradition, worked out by Greek artists, but for Scythian or Sindo-Maeotian customers. When these indigenous ethnic elements became an important segment of Bosporan society, their conceptions were adopted by the rest of the population. The image of the anguipede or tendril-limbed goddess, so popular all over the Northern Black Sea coast, penetrated the art of the semi-barbaric Bosporan cities,[53] preserving even such details as horses flanking her figure. This iconographic conservatism reflects the ideological continuity linking the Scythian and the Bosporan goddesses. More than that, in the Bosporan pantheon, as in Scythia and Maeotia, the monstrous tendril-shaped creature appeared together with Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*, to a certain extent almost duplicated her—and nevertheless always remained distinct from the great goddess.

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[53] A similar development, although on a less considerable scale, took place in Chersonesus.

1.3.2.6 *Terracotta Figurines*

In the first–third centuries AD terracotta figurines become much less popular than formerly; in the tombs they were partially replaced by glass bottles, pottery, and amulets. Terracotta imports also declined, and the number of characters was reduced (Kobylina 1961: 155).

In the first century AD Aphrodite *Anadyomene* is the most popular subject (Kruglikova 1977: 55).[54] Aphrodite was also represented inside a shell (*TSP* 3: pl. 23: 4), as well as with dolphins, doves, hares or apples; on a third-century AD terracotta relief from Gorgippia she is shown with Pothos (Kruglikova 1977: 56; Alexeyeva 1986: 40). Sometimes a nude Aphrodite was portrayed together with a herm of Priapus and Eros; in a number of groups the latter is replaced by infant Harpocrates with a cornucopia (Kobylina 1978: 118–119; 131).

In contrast to these relatively fine items, there are a number of crudely executed examples, such as a figurine of Aphrodite from Tanais (Arsen'eva and Šelov 1988: fig. 14: 4): the standing goddess, her high calathus covered with a veil, touches her breast with one hand and holds a mirror with the other.

In the second century AD the prevalent image is that of a goddess, seated on a throne with a very high back, wearing a pointed headgear, similar to that of the Karagodeouashkh goddess, and covered with a veil (plate 17); busts of a goddess were also popular (*TSP* 1–2: pl. 52: 3). Sometimes the goddess is shown with a veil directly on her head, her polos above the veil. In several cases the goddess is depicted with a radiate crown (Ivanova 1954: 254; Kobylina 1961: 159–162). As to her attributes, she usually holds a patera in one hand, and a round object, either an apple, a pomegranate, or a sphere, in the other (Ivanova 1954: 254). In some instances she holds a dove (Kobylina 1961: 160). All these attributes identify the goddess not just as the local Great Mother (Kobylina 1961: 159–163), but as Aphrodite *Ourania*.[55] The figure of the goddess is sometimes deformed to such a degree that her ugliness seems deliberate (Kobylina 1961: 161–162) even against the background of the workmanship of Bosporan terracottas of the second–third centuries AD, which is usually very poor. This deformity is reminiscent of the reliefs from Nympheaum (1.3.2.4). Some terracotta figurines, particularly those found in rural settlements (*TSP* 1–2: pl. 54: 5), are handmade in a very crude manner (Kruglikova 1966: 85) and resemble the goddess depicted on the clay stamp seal from Iluratum (below, 1.3.2.8).

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[54] An imported second–third century AD bronze figurine, found in Gorgippia, is also modeled on the same fourth-century BC original by Apelles (Kruglikova 1977: 55).

[55] She is regarded as Cybele by some, yet the lack of Cybele's attributes makes this identification highly improbable.

There are few similar figurines with a tambourine as one of the attributes of the goddess. They might represent Cybele, whose cult existed in the late Bosporan Kingdom, yet the suggestion that this deity was the local Great Goddess, Aphrodite *Ourania*, whose iconography had been influenced by the iconography of Cybele (Ivanova 1954: 254), seems more plausible. The same is valid for a few representations of Tyche with a cornucopia; when depicted with a rudder (Kobylina 1961: 165), she becomes Isis *Panthea*.[56] However, the Gorgippian Isis-Aphrodite is reminiscent of the Bosporan cult of Aphrodite as *Nauarchis*. On the other hand, the cornucopia is also associated with the cult of Aphrodite on the Bosporus, since Harpocrates holds this symbol in the terracottas groups representing Aphrodite with him and Priapus (Kobylina 1978: 131). It is significant that a goddess with a cornucopia is depicted in the upper register of the Karagodeouashkh plate (plate 9).[57]

Figurines of Eros are rather common in Bosporan tombs. His image was sometimes "barbarized": the winged youth was shown armed, wearing a torque, and dressed in a typical Sarmatian costume (Gaydukevich and Kaposhina 1951: fig. 14; Ivanova 1954: 167; 1961: 63).[58]

So-called "marionettes," jointed terracotta figurines with pendular limbs, that could be moved with a thread as if dancing, became widespread in the first centuries AD (plate 18; *TSP* 3: pls. 55: 4, 7, 8;

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[56] Cf. a bronze statuette of Isis with a sistrum on her head, holding a rudder in one hand and the cornucopia in the other (*GGR* 2: 632, pl. 11: 3). See *GGR* 2: 575 on the Aphrodite-Isis-Tyche syncretism in late Antiquity.

[57] A Hellenistic (third–first century BC) marble statue of a sitting goddess, wearing a calathus, at present lacking other attributes (according to a suggestion of Alexeyeva, she formerly held a cornucopia), was identified as Tyche (Alexeyeva 1986: 44, fig. 7). However, the statue was discovered in the same house where a terracotta "figurine of the Great Goddess," a mold for the manufacture of such figurines, a figurine of a pregnant woman, and "clay birds intended for cultic purposes" were found (Alexeyeva 1986: 45). If the marble statue indeed portrayed Tyche, which is far from being certain, this complex attests a syncretism between Tyche and the local goddess, who was the indigenous counterpart of Aphrodite *Ourania*.

[58] Kobylina (1978: 16) identifies as Attis figurines of a winged youth wearing a Phrygian cap.

56: 2–5; Marchenko 1974a). They were found throughout the Bosporan region (Kobylina 1961: 163–164; Gaydukevich 1949: 390–391; Ivanova 1953: 166; Shelov 1972: 291–292), but were especially popular in the cities of its European part (Blavatskiy 1974a). Although this type was known in the Greek world (Marchenko 1974a: 39), Rostovtzev (1918: 178; 1925: 175) connected Bosporan marionettes with indigenous beliefs; his opinion was accepted by Gaydukevich (1949: 391), who suggested that these figurines represented local demons and associated their emergence with the Sarmatization of the Bosporus. Kobylina (1961: 163) and Marchenko (1974a: 43) related marionettes to the cult of the local Mother Goddess.

The shape of the figurines varies. In the first–second centuries AD some of them represent dancing youths; others have ears of corn(?) on their heads or hold musical instruments (*TSP* 3: pl. 56: 3; Marchenko 1974a: 40–41). Popular in the first–fourth centuries AD are figurines of warriors holding shields, with pendular legs and phalli (Marchenko 1974a: 41), that are reminiscent of the Corybantic armed dancers in Cybele's honor (Strabo 10.3.11–13; Aristoph. *Lysistr.* 120; Voutiras 1996: fig. 7; cf. Linforth 1946: 122). Figures holding birds, animals, vessels, etc., are conventionally called "offering-holders" (*TSP* 3: pl. 56: 4); most of them were found in Panticapaeum (Marchenko 1974a: 41). So-called "priests," dated to the second–third centuries AD, wear strange head-dresses with three long ledges, have pendulous legs and phalli, and hold various objects: a flute, a bird, a branch, a crown, an ear of corn, a shield, a fish, etc. (*TSP* 3: pl. 56: 2, 4; Marchenko 1974a: 42). Remarkable are marionettes of "priests" holding effigies of a seated goddess; sometimes even the attributes of the goddess, a patera and a sphere or an apple, are visible (*TSP* 3: pls. 55: 7, 8; 56.1; *AGSP*: pl. 121: 6). There are also female marionettes holding a horseman in one instance and a seated bearded man in the other (*TSP* 3: pl. 56. 7; Ivanova 1954: 256). A figurine from Tanais features a "priest" holding a representation of a seated goddess, a goose attached to his dress (Arsen'eva and Šelov 1988: fig. 14: 3). Extremely significant is one more type, possessing both phallus and female breasts (plate 18; Marchenko 1974a: 42).

The representations of the seated goddess with patera and sphere in the Bosporus of the first centuries AD could portray only Aphrodite *Ourania.* In fact, in the few cases in which the marionettes originate from properly described archaeological complexes, they are known to be accompanied by figurines of Eros (Marchenko 1974a: 41;

Gaydukevich 1951: 209). The androgyny of a number of marionettes makes their connection with Aphrodite almost certain. It is corroborated by the Tanais figurine with the goose, one of Aphrodite's birds. Warriors with clinging weapons accompanied not only Cybele, but other great goddesses, as well; indeed, Scytho-Maeotian Aphrodite *Ourania* and Cybele had many common traits. Cultic masquerade, supposed by the figurines with ears of corn, could certainly be a part of the ceremonies in honor of the Great Goddess. On the whole, the repertory of types of the marionettes fits Aphrodite *Ourania* perfectly. Since her cult was associated with the worship of other gods, first and foremost the horseman, symbols of these gods were naturally allotted to the jointed figurines.

1.3.2.7 *Vaults and Sarcophagi*

The most ancient mural paintings from the Bosporus vaults are dated to the fourth century BC; the most recent were executed in the fourth century AD.[59] A study of the artistic peculiarities of the paintings and of the architecture of the vaults is beyond the scope of the present work; hence the survey of the first–third century AD vaults will be limited to a very brief examination of the subjects of the paintings relevant to the study of cults.

Apparent Eleusinian beliefs are conveyed in the murals of the late first century BC–early first century AD vault, discovered in 1895[60] (*ADZh* 199–226, pls. 56–62; Ivanova 1955b: 287–292; Ernshtedt 263–265), depicting: the abduction of Kore by Pluto; Demeter; as well as Hermes *Psychopompos* and Calypso near the entrance—all these against the background of garlands, acanthus leaves, and birds.

Of the vault discovered by A. B. Ashik Rostovtzev saw only rather inexact drawings, by which he dated it to the first–second centuries AD (*ADZh* 346–375; pls. 87–91; Gaydukevich 1949: 414–415). It contained a number of paintings: a seated woman, with another woman and Hermes; musicians; a man leading a horse; a funeral procession in front of a tomb, its general order producing an impression of a rather hellenized ceremony; a funeral feast; hunting scenes; a battle of horsemen; peacocks, swans, doves and heads of Silens; the abduction of Persephone and related subjects; several scenes showing different kinds of gladiators[61]—standard compositions copying those usually decorating Bosporan tombstones. On the whole, the style and contents of the paintings indicate adherence to the traditions of Asia Minor, perhaps even deliberate archaization (*ADZh* 367), with some Bosporan elements. This was probably a tomb of a hellenizing aristocrat, himself a general and an organizer of gladiatorial games (*ADZh* 373).

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[59] Painted vaults of the Northern Black Sea littoral, the majority discovered on the Bosporus, were published by Rostovtzev in his monumental study (*ADZh*); since then only a few new paintings have been unearthed. This work retains its significance as a standard publication of this material. A very brief summary of this book, dealing mainly with the stylistic aspects of the paintings, has appeared in English: Rostovtzev 1919a. A general survey of the paintings was later published by Ernshtedt (1955).

[60] Many Bosporan vaults are referred to by the years of their discovery, or by the names of the people who found them.

The vault of Anthesterios (plate 19) has already been discussed above (1.3.2.2). Some traits of scenes represented on the frescos of a first-century AD vault, discovered in 1891 (*ADZh* 183–198; pls. 53–55; Ernshtedt 1955: 258–262), are reminiscent of the vault of Anthesterios: a funeral feast with a yurt in the background, the main characters being a seated woman and a reclining man; and a deified horseman facing a woman. The second scene is a sacrifice near an altar performed by two figures, male and female, holding a cornucopia, the woman wearing a polos; beside them a woman dances, a deer behind her, and a tree. In a niche is a rose bush, with a large kantharos flanked by two peacocks beneath the bush. Near the entrance are the figures of a goddess, wearing either a polos, or the feathered headdress of Isis, with a cornucopia and an oar, and of a youth holding a scepter or some other long object. These scenes are accompanied by garlands and fantastic birds.

The pair near the altar might represent either Isis and Sarapis, or a Thracian pair of chthonic deities. Although the local atmosphere makes a pure Greek version of the Egyptian cult unthinkable (*ADZh* 191–193), a certain degree of Egyptian influence is still plausible. A kantharo*s* with a rosebush flanked by peacocks, together with the dancing figure, indicates a link to a vegetation-cult and some ecstatic rites involving wine drinking.

Some paintings of a second-century AD vault, discovered in 1875 (*ADZh* 260–271; pls. 73–75), are similar to those decorating the 1891 vault. They show a funeral feast, with the deceased reclining on a couch beside a seated woman. This scene is flanked by tall trees. A vine with small boys climbing it also appears, as well as a horseman, probably facing a seated woman (this part of the fresco is not extant). The central mural of the vault, however, portrays Apollo playing the lyre and riding a griffin in front of a goddess riding a bull.[62] Apollo, the lord of the Hyperboreans, accompanied by griffins, was one of the most popular deities of the Bosporus after its colonization by Ionians (Ehrhardt 1983: 141; Shaub 1987a: 71–88); he then still retained some chthonic aspects. The return of this image, on the background of typical late Bosporan scenes of a funeral feast and a horseman with his attendants, demonstrates that the same subjects could be associated with various ideas, or probably with syncretistic beliefs, involving heterogeneous elements. Rostovtzev's (*ADZh* 289) suggestion that the pairing of Apollo/the goddess in this vault conveys the idea of apotheosis of the dead, as well as the pair of deities with the cornucopia in the 1891 vault, is rather tempting, although these scenes might be also interpreted as simply representing chthonic deities, not necessarily merging with the dead.

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[61] Gladiatorial games were probably instituted on the Bosporus by the semi-Thracian royal dynasty (*ADZh* 357).

In 1975 two vaults dated to the second–third centuries AD were discovered in Gorgippia. On the walls of the first one, the so-called "vault of Heracles," the twelve labors of Heracles are painted (Alexeyeva 1986: fig. 2; *AGSP* pl. 62. 4), as well as a man and a woman, both seated (probably the deceased; *AGSP* pl. 62. 3), trees, peacocks, turtles, etc. (Kruglikova 1987: 88). This vault was pillaged in antiquity, while the second one, undecorated, probably belonging to the same family, contained a rich inventory, including numerous gold pendants and jewelry, inlaid weapons, and a gold crown with a representation of Aphrodite *Ourania* holding a scepter, with Eros on its central plate (Kruglikova 1987: 89; Alexeyeva 1986: fig. 1).

Paintings of a late first–early second century AD vault, discovered in 1873 (*ADZh* 227–243, pls. 63, 65.1–3; Ernshtedt 1955: 265–267) were not completely preserved. One needs a great deal of imagination to accept Rostovtzev's interpretation of the badly damaged remains of an unclear scene as *anodos* of Kore, since only some female figures with unclear attributes are visible. Above this scene are several other female figures, one of them winged, and birds. The second scene depicts a battle of two horsemen wearing Sarmatian dress, the horse of the victor trampling down prostrated enemies. There are also depictions of a kantharos with a griffin near it, trees and peacocks flanking a vessel. A large winged head of Medusa and a panther decorate the second room of the vault (*AGSP* pl. 110: 3). The combination of a winged female figure and Medusa with a panther recall the indigenous winged and snake-limbed goddesses, the mistresses of animals. The overall symbolism of the vault conveys hellenized local beliefs, associated with the deification of the deceased, rather than a combination of Eleusinian and Orphic notions, as suggested by Rostovtzev.

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[62] Rostovtzev suggested that the goddess was Artemis; however, representations of Europa riding a bull frequently appeared on objects placed in Bosporan tombs already in the fourth century BC (Shaub 1987a: 62–70).

The vault of Soracos (plate 20; *CIRB* 731), dated by Rostovtzev to the first–third centuries AD (*ADZh* 244–252; pl. 65.4; Ernshtedt 1955: 287–269), is painted with garlands and flowers, figures of Hermes and Erotes, a dancing pygmy, a large ugly Silen's head, and a scene of a funeral feast (*AGSP* pl. 110: 4). The latter depicts the deceased reclining on a couch and a woman en face, sitting on an armchair with its back decorated with a gable, which produces an impression of a *naiskos* above her head. The attitude of the seated woman and the presence of Erotes and the Silen's head render probable the association with Aphrodite.

The head of Medusa and vines also decorated a vault discovered in 1902 (*ADZh* 272–276; pl. 66; Ernshtedt 1955: 275). Rostovtzev, commenting on the frequent occurrence of the heads of Medusa and Silen in the tombs of the first–third centuries AD, explains it as a predominance of apotropaic subjects, unheard of on the Bosporus during the Hellenistic period (*ADZh* 251).[63] However, these images, as demonstrated above, were associated with local beliefs, and it was the massive penetration of these beliefs into the Bosporan religion that caused the changes in the repertory of funeral motifs.

This barbarization or Iranization of both the contents and the style characterize other vaults of the second–third centuries AD, a second-century AD vault discovered in 1872[64] (*ADZh* 293–345; pls. 76–80; Ernshtedt 1955: 275–281; Gaydukevich 1949: 415–419) among them. A tree flanked by a deer and a dog, two symmetrically painted panthers with Eros near them, another Eros beside a lion, and a rosebush, a peacock, a bear and a wild boar between two trees—all these images, most of them appearing already in the traditional repertory of symbols of Scythian tumuli, suppose an association with Aphrodite *Ourania.* Other scenes depict battles between mounted and foot warriors, dressed and armed in typical late Bosporan style, and the bodies of killed enemies and their severed heads scattered everywhere, on a background of vegetal ornaments and birds. Battle pictures, occurring not infrequently in Sarmatian art (Treister 1994: figs. 1, 7–9) emphasize the heroic deeds of the characters, who were perhaps believed to have been inspired and guided by Aphrodite in her war-like role. The depictions of animals and trees, reminiscent of a Persian or Parthian paradise (*ADZh* 344; cf. Ghirshman 1962: 264), allow their association with the notion of an ideal garden, whose mistress was also Aphrodite. In fact, the same idea is conveyed by the name of the Bosporan town of Cepi.

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[63] To be sure, the Medusa head was a common motif in Roman funeral art. Presumably intended to serve as an *apotropaeum*, it appears repeatedly on Roman sarcophagi from Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean: Koch and Sichtermann 1982: ills. 23, 209, 268, 311, 388, 405, 472, 480, 482, 483, 501, 504, 509, 515, 516, 542, 562, 566, 572, 575, 577, 593.

[64] Known otherwise as Stasov's vault.

A group of later painted vaults, dated to the third–fourth centuries AD (Ernshtedt 1955: 282; Gaydukevich 1949: 470–474; Gajdukevič 1971: 488), are labeled "geometric-style" vaults. These are tombs discovered in 1873, 1890, 1894, 1897, 1901, 1904, 1905 and 1912 (*ADZh* 401–434; pls. 97–101). All the murals are executed similarly: red or black line drawings of schematic figures. Vines with grapes, sometimes emerging from vessels, trees, and birds are present in almost all the vaults. Once an eagle is shown sitting on a branch, two disks flanking his head. In two vaults there are paintings of ships; in one vault two circles, divided into eight segments, are drawn (cf. above, 1.2.3.4). Among the human representations, large male figures are usually shown wearing a sort of Phrygian cap, with such attributes as a bow, a branch, and a vine. Smaller figures, holding either two circles, or a circle and a stick, are always dancing. The heads of the smaller figures are bird-like; sometimes horsemen are depicted, once with a deer; there are also herms and heads with radiate crowns above one of the ships.

Rostovtzev (*ADZh* 427–428) assumes, that larger figures represent deities, while smaller ones are their human worshipers, dancing to the accompaniment of tambourines or the jingle of weapons. Two large bearded figures with Phrygian caps, flanking the eagle, and the representations of snakes indicate, in his opinion, that the worshipped deity was Sabazios, vine and birds belonging to his realm, while herms and heads represent the Sun and the Moon. However, he hesitates over the meaning of the drawings showing the ships and the god drawing a bow. He suggests a connection with Thracian horseman, and observed that eagles usually decorate monuments of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult and that all the figures depicted in the vaults of these groups are exclusively male, exactly as the thiasotes of *Theos Hypsistos* (*ADZh* 431–433). Rostovtzev's interpretation is accepted unanimously, and since his time the "geometric-style" vaults have been conventionally called the tombs of the *Sabaziastai*.

There is no direct evidence related to the cult of Sabazios on the Bosporus (El'nitzkiy 1946: 98).[65] In the paintings in the vaults no attributes or specific symbols of Sabazios have been detected thus far. Objects that Rostovtzev regarded as snakes may well be sticks, scepters, or something else; they are too schematic to be identified with any confidence (El'nitzkiy 1946: 108). Moreover, some motifs remained obscure even to Rostovtzev, and they emphatically do not belong to the realm of Sabazios. Both Sabazios' headdress and the traditional Scythian and Sarmatian caps look the same. The figure with a bow and the horsemen immediately recall the local gods and heroes, usually shown with a *gorytos* or a bow. On the Bosporus eagles almost exclusively decorated monuments of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult (below, 2.1.1.1). Dancing figures, resembling very much those from the vaults of *Sabaziastai*, were depicted among the schematic representations of the anguipede goddess in the monumental tombs of Neapolis Scythica, contemporary with the Bosporan vaults (Vysotskaya 1979: 161; *SSSV* 137). Ships might also have been associated with Aphrodite. As to the absence of female figures, this observation is not correct: a number of figures wear the same bell-shaped dress as the goddess on the Iluratum stamp seal (plate 22), and on the relief from the Chayka site (plate 10: 1). Moreover, one of the radiate heads looks like that of a female, as Rostovtzev himself admits (*ADZh* 414); Aphrodite *Ourania* was sometimes portrayed with a radiate crown both on the coins and in terracotta. Herms of the goddess, Aphrodite *Ourania*, were known on the Bosporus. Since the marionettes hold representations of the goddess, and also such symbols, as shields, birds and grapes, it is likely that both the vaults of

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[65] The indirect evidence is confined to a few terracottas of bearded men wearing Phrygian caps (El'nitzkiy 1946) and several hints probably meaning that there existed some links between Sabazios and *Theos Hypsistos* (below, 2.3.4).

Sabaziastai and the jointed figurines reflect similar, if not the same, beliefs. Only two cults, of Aphrodite *Ourania* and of the Most High God, were popular enough in the late Bosporan kingdom to produce such a series of identical monuments. Therefore the paintings of the geometric-style vaults seem to reflect rites that were celebrated not in honor of Sabazios, but of *Theos Hypsistos* and the Great Goddess, Aphrodite *Ourania*.[66]

The decoration of sarcophagi with plaster sculpture is a unique feature of the Bosporus. The favorite subjects are the tendril-limbed goddess (above, 1.3.2.5), Erotes riding dolphins and doves, masks of Medusa, bulls and lions (Gaydukevich 1949: 397, fig. 69; Ivanova 1954: 172; Ivanova 1955a: 423–426), all of them related to the cult of Aphrodite *Ourania*. The death of the Niobids (Ivanova 1961: 62), tragic masks, and animal and vegetal ornaments were also very popular (Ivanova 1954: 168–172). The same subjects, as well as depictions of animals, mythological creatures and gladiators decorated most carved wooden sarcophagi (Ivanova 1955a: 418–422).

Late Bosporan vaults, notwithstanding the difficulties of the interpretation of their paintings, convey a general impression of the gradual barbarization and unification of subjects. While the first–second century AD murals in some cases reflect almost purely Greek ideas (Eleusinian cycle, etc.) and are executed in accordance with classical tastes, at the beginning of the Roman period such subjects as the battle of horsemen wearing pants and scenes in front of yurts indicate the profound changes in the lifestyle and ideology of the Bosporan nobility. Symbols that were usual in the tombs of indigenous aristocracy began to appear rather often on the walls of the Panticapaeum vaults. However, along with subjects that may be associated with Aphrodite *Ourania*, such as Medusa or Silen heads, a goddess or a deified mortal woman sitting en face, Erotes, etc., there are other themes. For instance, the representation of a pair of Chthonic deities holding cornucopia indicates that some diversity in personal tastes and beliefs still continued, despite the repetitions of standard scenes, such as a battle or a funerary feast. This variability disappears in the third century AD: all the "geometric-style" tombs were decorated similarly, all the paintings showing the same images and reflecting the same cults, most probably those of *Theos Hypsistos* and Aphrodite.

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[66] Gaydukevich (1949: 474) admits that these vaults may have belonged to the adepts of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult. El'nitzkiy (1956: 109) suggested that the deities were Cybele and Attis.

The repertory of subjects represented on the Bosporan murals and on the sarcophagi is much richer than that on tombstones, confined almost entirely to funeral feasts, portraits of the deceased woman, and depictions of deceased men as foot- or mounted warriors. This difference might result from technical reasons: it was relatively more convenient to represent complicated subjects in painting or plaster sculpture, as compared to stone cutting, which was more conservative both from the point of view of artistic style and the themes. It may be curious that this uniformity in reliefs on the tombstones existed simultaneously with the diversity in the murals (first–second centuries AD), and that the custom of decorating stelae with reliefs disappeared in the third century AD, at the same time when the paintings in the vaults began to be so similar one to another.

1.3.2.8 *House Shrines of the Goddess and Related Artifacts*

The image of the goddess with arboreal hands appears also on a third-century AD clay stamp seal (plate 22; Gaydukevich 1951: 209; Gajdukevič 1971: fig. 111) from a large fortress (actually a town) of Iluratum, remarkable for its mixed Scytho-Sarmato-Greek population, hellenized less than the inhabitants of the large Bosporan towns (Gaydukevich 1951: 208). The stamp depicts a goddess wearing a bell-shaped dress, raising her hands in the form of branches or schematic leaves, with a radiate or vegetal crown on her head, probably indicating that her head was meant to look like the top of a tree.[67] The goddess is flanked by two griffins, a schematically represented bird shown near her head.

The Iluratum stamp has a handle (Gaydukevich 1958: 83–84); as do other Bosporan stamp seals. Such stamp seals are known to have been used in the Classical world for shaping pastry (Flinders Petrie 1886: 45; Kruglikova 1952: 122, 125), and perhaps other soft media, such as clay or wax (Shelov 1965: 230; 234–235). Since in Cimmericum a clay stamp was found in a granary, together with grinding implements (Kruglikova 1952: 125), it seems fairly certain that on the Bosporus these stamp seals were used in baking, obviously for cultic purposes, or in the production of ritual clay models of cakes, which were placed into tombs (Tzekhmistrenko 1962: 279).

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[67] A figure with a similar head, decorating the striped surface of a vessel discovered in Iluratum, was interpreted as a figure of a goddess with an ear-shaped head, lying on a wheat-field (Shurgaya 1986: 220). If this suggestion is correct, it means that the local Aphrodite was believed to grant fertility to corn, also. In one of the rooms belonging to an Iluratum private house, an ash-altar and pairs of male and female figurines with particularly prominent genitalia have been unearthed. Shurgaya relates these figurines to the same magical beliefs.

The same Iluratum house, where the stamp seal was discovered, contained a collection of terracotta figurines: a protome of a goddess, a seated goddess, Aphrodite wearing a calathus and holding a sphere, and Eros with a barbaric torque. The last two finds indicate that most probably other figurines represent Aphrodite (Gaydukevich 1958: fig. 73). The find of a terracotta marionette of a woman with a sophisticated headdress, wearing a bell-shaped dress (Gaydukevich 1951: 209; Gajdukevič 1971: 409–411) demonstrates that this type of terracotta was used specifically in rituals in honor of the semi-Greek, semi-barbaric Aphrodite.

This room was not the only private dwelling in Iluratum used for cultic purposes. A large chamber of another house was used as a kind of a sanctuary. There a severed head was found placed on an altar (Gaydukevich 1958: 43–45). It belonged to a man, 30–35 years old, and had been set on the altar as a head, and not as a skull, as demonstrated by the articulation of the cervical vertebrae (A. D. Grach 1952: 175–178). The ritual thus disclosed is most probably connected with the cult of Aphrodite, whose barbaric as well as more hellenized representations were found in the neighboring house (A. D. Grach 1952: 179; Gaydukevich 1958: 46–47): the local tribes decapitated their defeated enemies in honor of the Great Goddess; the anguipede goddess was depicted with a bearded head in her hand. The same ritual was probably performed in the cultic complex on the Scytho-Sarmatian site of Elizavetovskoye, where severed heads were found together with small votive plates (Brašinskij and Marčenko 1984: 65).

Excavations of the two Iluratum houses therefore provided further information on the "barbaric aspect" of the cult of Aphrodite *Ourania*, worshipped both by the hellenized citizens of the towns and the inhabitants of the rural hinterland, who were much closer to the indigenous tradition.

In Tanais a curious cultic complex was discovered in a cellar under an exedra-type chamber of a second–third century AD private house (Shelov 1972: 283–286). The small chamber itself, with its two hearths, is rather unusual; still more remarkable is the cellar, where seven clay stamp seals were found along with a small altar, five portable incense-burners,[68] a number of lamps, and other ceramic vessels.

The stamps, their diameters varying between 3.5 and 8.9 cm, bear solar and vegetal designs (plate 21: 3; Shelov 1965: fig. 1). Five other stamps, discovered exclusively in the town of Tanais, and never in its necropolis, bear vegetal motifs which sometimes include leaves (Shelov 1965: fig. 2). All the stamp seals were manufactured from local clay, have handles and were used for the same purpose as in Iluratum (Shelov 1965: 324–235). Very few terracottas have been discovered both in the town and in the necropolis: an eagle, the lower part of a figurine of a woman, Cybele with a tympanum, and jointed figurines (Shelov 1972: 291–292). Since nothing else is known about the cult of Cybele in Tanais, it seems reasonable to associate all the terracottas, except the eagle, with the cult of the local Aphrodite, who indeed shared many features with Cybele.

Shelov (1972: 288) suggested that the deity worshipped in the cellar with the stamps was *Theos Hypsistos*, firstly, because his cult was presumably performed in another Tanais cellar, and secondly, because one Panticapaum clay impression, that might have been made with similar stamp seal, represents an eagle, and eagles clutching snakes were related in his opinion to the cults of *Theos Hypsistos* and *Theos Bronton Epekoos* (below, 2.3.4). However, the identification of these two gods seems problematic (Ustinova 1991: 167, 179; below, 2.3.4); all the clay stamps are decorated with the attributes of the goddess and are interpreted as belonging mainly to her cult (Tzekhmistrenko 1962: 281). The cult of Aphrodite *Ourania* is attested in Tanais, the Iluratum stamp seal represented either this goddess or a deity closely associated with her, and the inventory of the Tanais cellar, where the stamps were discovered, matches the description of the mystery cult found in Phanagoria (*CIRB* 1005). It seems therefore most likely that the ceremonies in the cellar and the chamber above it were performed in honor of Aphrodite *Ourania*, naturally in accordance with the simpler tastes and less hellenized notions that characterize the inhabitants of Tanais as compared to the citizens of the major Bosporan towns.[69]

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[68] Characteristically Sarmatian in shape (Shelov 1972: 285).

[69] Similar underground house shrines with altars and lamps were discovered in Roman Chersonesus (Shelov 1972: 287–288). One may wonder whether it is just

Clay stamp seals, all of them about 10 cm in diameter and dated to the second–third centuries AD, were discovered in other Bosporan cities: the stamp from Cimmericum features a bird with a snake (Kruglikova 1952: fig. 40);[70] of two stamps from Phanagoria one shows a griffin facing another animal and a peacock drinking from a kantharos on a vine beneath them, and the second one an animal holding a snake (plate 21: 1, 2). On a stamp seal from Panticapaeum a running deer, holding a snake in his mouth, and a swan drinking from a kantharos are represented facing a tree, the letter A incised above the deer (plate 21: 4). The swan on the Bosporus was associated with Aphrodite; deer are shown flanking the winged goddess on the plate from Alexandropol'skiy tumulus (above, 1.2.3.4; *SSSV* pl. 34: 8).

Most significant is the gold diadem (plate 23) from a first–second century AD Sarmatian Khokhlach tumulus (Tolstoy and Kondakov 1890: 13; Minns 1913: 233; Ivanova 1953: 118; Gajdukevič 1971: 397–398). The diadem, manufactured by a Sarmatian goldsmith, features an amethyst bust of a goddess, executed by a Greek artist, in the middle. On both sides of the bust are birds; exactly above the bust there is a representation of a tree, flanked by two deer; and two additional pairs of wild goats, symmetrically approaching the first pair, trees and ducks behind them. The interpretation of the diadem as showing Aphrodite *Ourania* and the Tree of Life, surrounded by solar animals—deer,[71] and animals symbolizing this world—ducks (Rayevskiy 1972), is corroborated by the discovery of a figurine of Eros in the same tomb (Gajdukevič 1971: 398).

Another stamp from Panticapaeum (plate 21: 5) shows a figure wearing a bell-shaped dress, with a radiate head, reminiscent of the figure on the Iluratum stamp seal, standing between an altar and two animals; the first one looks like a large goat or cow, and the second one is probably a calf; a snake coils beneath them. The goddess is certainly not leading the animals to the altar, as Tzekhmistrenko (1962: 280) argues, but accepting them as sacrificial victims.

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a coincidence that the tutelary goddess of Chersonesus was Parthenos, as closely associated with the indigenous goddess, as Bosporan Aphrodite *Ourania* was.

[70] Since the picture is rendered schematically and the bird's head is not extant, it is impossible to define the kind of bird, and to be certain, as Tzekhmistrenko is (1962: 281), that it is an eagle.

[71] Kuz'mina (1977: 104) discusses at length the solar symbolism of deer and their semantic isofunctionality with horses.

This stamp very much resembles the one from Iluratum and is likely to have been associated with the same cult (Tzekhmistrenko 1962: 281). Griffins, snakes, a bird, a deer, and a swan, which have been represented on other stamp seals, were also depicted on various objects of art portraying Aphrodite. In fact, the paintings from the 1872 vault show a garden, where various animals (peacocks, panthers, a lion, a deer, a dog, a wild boar) are represented among trees, together with two Erotes: this paradise is therefore also associated with Aphrodite.

Vines and kantharoi belong to the cult of Dionysos or Sabazios. The set of symbols which includes a snake, a peacock, a tree, and a krater usually occurs on Sabazios' votive hands (Milchev 1977; Johnson 1984: 1595–1598).[72] However, representations of satyrs and dancing maenads (Bessonova 1983: 74–75, fig. 6), reminiscent of Dionysos, were frequently found in indigenous archaeological complexes, connected with the anguipede goddess and Aphrodite *Ourania* (Shelov 1950; Rayevskiy 1985: 172–175). Dancing, implied by the jointed marionettes, also presumes wine drinking. In fact, some marionettes are represented holding a kantharos (Marchenko 1974a: 45; pl. 55: 4). The same images appear also in the paintings of the so-called vaults of *Sabaziastai*. All these symbols blended together convey an idea of orgiastic fertility and vegetation cult, which could be associated with several divinities known in the Greco-Roman world, but on the Bosporus of the first centuries AD were most probably celebrated in honor of Aphrodite *Ourania,* uniting the traits of the local Great Goddess and Aphrodite-Astarte. However, the possibility that at least some stamps among those not featuring the goddess belonged to a different deity or deities, cannot be ruled out.

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[72] A peacock and a grape are represented on a plate discovered in a late Bosporan grave. The plate is inscribed εἴλεώς μοι ὁ θεός, and is attributed to Christian beliefs (Solomonik 1973a: 72, fig. 16). However, the invocations εἴλεός μοι ὁ θεός appear on a series of jars from third–fourth century AD burials in Chersonesos, alongside the invocation εἴλεός [μοι] εἴς ἡ τύχη, and inscriptions containing names of various pagan gods (Solomonik 1973a: 64–67). The entire series appears as pagan. Comparison with these jars, as well as with cited stamps, renders the interpretation of the plate as Christian questionable. If so, this plate indicates that monuments featuring peacocks and grapes belong to the cult of a god, rather than a goddess. However, since the plate is unique for the Bosporus and is compared with artifacts from a different area, its interpretation is far from being unequivocal.

1.3.3 *Conclusions*

The image of Aphrodite *Ourania*, who was worshipped throughout the Bosporan Kingdom in the first centuries AD, evolved as a synthesis of Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa*, the most popular goddess of the early Bosporus, and the local Scytho-Maeoto-Sarmatian Great Goddess, the latter associated with Aphrodite *Ourania* both by the Greeks and the indigenous population as early as in the fifth century BC. The amalgamation of functionally similar cults, that to a certain extent even shared a common Anatolian-Levantine origin, resulted in the emergence of an all-embracing divinity, reigning in all the spheres of this and the nether world. This divinity actually absorbed the diverse functions of a number of goddesses formerly venerated on the Bosporus; the encroachment of Aphrodite *Ourania* upon the realms of other goddesses was facilitated by their proximity to her numerous domains, as well as by the correspondence in the ritual and the affinity in origin.

The continuity of the Greek tradition in the cult of Aphrodite is expressed in the title of the goddess, in the preservation of the ancient sanctuaries, in the perpetuation of Hellenistic iconography both in monumental sculpture and in terracotta, together with the permanence of some basic mythological connections, first of all with Eros. The impact of the indigenous cult manifests itself in several spheres. The absolute preeminence of Aphrodite *Ourania* as a patroness of the king and his kingdom, attested by inscriptions and coins, her role as a grantor of military victory, her function as a guardian of the dead in the nether world, the idea of a communion between the goddess and a deified king, a general or a simple mortal—all these traits were borrowed by the Bosporan Aphrodite from her local counterparts. The appearance in Bosporan art of the goddess with leaf-shaped hands and of the tendril-limbed goddess, both closely related to Scytho-Maeotian Aphrodite *Ourania*, resulted from the same process. The evidence of the rituals associated with Aphrodite, provided by the paintings from the "geometric-style" vaults, jointed terracottas, and clay stamps, which were discovered only in late Bosporan complexes, allows us to appreciate the profound changes that the cult of the goddess underwent during the first centuries AD.

The cult of Aphrodite in the Bosporan Kingdom was homogenous, although certain differences between the center and the periphery indeed existed. This is indicated by the finds of similar stamp seals and jointed figurines both in major Bosporan cities and in provincial towns and fortresses, as well as the congruence of their symbolism with that of the painted vaults, on the one hand, and the distribution of monuments of more hellenized style on both sides of the strait and even in Tanais, on the other.

PART TWO

THEOS HYPSISTOS

2.0.1 INTRODUCTION[1]

The cult of the anonymous Most High God was apparently second in importance only to that of Aphrodite *Ourania*. Yet while Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* was worshipped on the Bosporus from the outset of Greek colonization, the earliest inscription in which *Theos Hypsistos* is explicitly mentioned is dated to the early first century AD (*CIRB* 1316). It is followed by a series of mid-second century AD inscriptions (*CIRB* 1260, AD 155; 1261, AD 131/2–153/4; 1260a, AD 154/5–170/1).[2] Thus, the cult of *Theos Hypsistos*, which emerged in the first century AD, reached its zenith in the third century AD, at least judging by the number of inscriptions left by the adherents of the cult.

The adepts of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult were organized in associations, thiasoi and synods, active mostly in Tanais and in Panticapaeum. Although Tanais was a small semi-barbaric town on the northeastern frontier of the Bosporan Kingdom, provincial even in the terms of this area, its cult associations, worshipping *Theos Hypsistos*, attracted the attention of numerous scholars, mainly students of Jewish proselytism in the first centuries AD. A hundred years ago Schürer published his article on σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὕψιστον in the Bosporan Kingdom, where he argued that the religion of these collegia was "neither Judaism nor paganism, but a neutralization of both" (1897: 225). Ever since, generations of writers either simply cite Schürer's paper as the final authority on the issue, or return to essentially the same reasoning, reiterating the same thesis. Only a few scholars have questioned Schürer's opinion, their criticism not always convincing, since it was seldom aimed at really weak points in his argumentation.

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[1] Many ideas expounded in this part have been set forth in an article on the thiasoi of *Theos Hypsistos* in Tanais (Ustinova 1991).

[2] The earliest Jewish manumissions from Gorgippia, addressed θεῷ ὑψίστῳ παντοκράτορι εὐλογητῷ, also belong to the first century AD (*CIRB* 1123, AD 41; *CIRB* 1126, AD 68[?]).

CIRB 1259, from Tanais, dated to AD 104, was most probably set up by a thiasos of *Theos Hypsistos*; however, the god is not named there.

Two tombstones, erected by synodalists (*CIRB* 78) in Panticapaeum, and by thiasotes (*CIRB* 987) in Phanagoria, are dated by the editors to the first century AD. In both inscriptions no deity is mentioned. Affiliation of these associations with the *Theos Hypsistos* cult seems very plausible (below, 2.1.2.1).

During the past hundred years very large quantities of new epigraphic and archaeological data have been discovered and published, shedding light on the history of the Bosporan Kingdom in general and of Tanais in particular. This evidence, which is extremely important for the proper understanding of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult, has been ignored by the majority of authors.

Part II therefore begins with a survey of the evidence on the cult of *Theos Hypsistos* in the Bosporan Kingdom, set against the background of social and cultural developments during the first–fourth centuries AD. This inquiry enables a re-evaluation of different approaches to the problem of the origin of the cult. The examination of the factual data and its interpretations is followed by an attempt to establish the nature of the associations of *sebomenoi Theon Hypsiston* and their role in the religious life of the Bosporan kingdom.

2.0.2 *The Identification of the Bosporan Theos Hypsistos: A Survey of Approaches*

Inscriptions from the Bosporan Kingdom attest to seven forms of designation of the anonymous god, or perhaps gods:

- θεὸς ὕψιστος παντοκράτωρ εὐλογητός (*CIRB* 1123; 1125; 1126; *SEG* 32.790—manumissions from Gorgippia);
- θεός (*CIRB* 71; manumission from Panticapaeum);
- θεὸς ὕψιστος ἐπήκοος (*CIRB* 64—inscription commemorating the erection of a προσευχή by a governor of Theodosia; 1260; 1278–1280; 1287; 1289—inscriptions of the Tanais thiasotes; 1316—dedication commemorating a rescue);
- θεὸς ὕψιστος (*CIRB* 1231—list of names from Gorgippia; 1260a; 1261; 1277–1286—inscriptions of the Tanais thiasotes);
- θεὸς ἐπήκοος (*CIRB* 1288—Tanais, inscription of a synod);
- θεὸς βροντῶν ἐπήκοος (*CIRB* 942—inscription on a cult table from Cytaeum);
- θεὸς δίκαιος (*CIRB* 1116—an ex-voto from Gorgippia).[3]

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[3] Perhaps also θεὸς μέγας: the fragmentary inscription from Gorgippia (*CIRB* 1202) is too damaged to maintain with certainty that this great god was anonymous.

The identification of the anonymous deity is controversial. Even the first two cases are not unequivocal: the manumissions, addressed to θεὸς ὕψιστος παντοκράτωρ εὐλογητός or θεός, which attest to the liberation of former slaves under the guardianship of synagogues (προσευχή), are considered Jewish by most authors (Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 65; Nadel 1948: 204, 1958: 145; Lifshitz 1964: 160; Levinskaya 1984; 1987; 1988; Dan'shin 1993). However, since manumittors swear by Zeus, Ge, and Helios, some scholars (Blawatskaya 1958; Boltunova 1971: 4; Tacheva-Hitova 1978b: 136) are reluctant to acknowledge a Jewish affiliation for these documents. Additional considerations suggest to Bij de Vaate and van Henten (1996: 25) that there are equal chances for *CIRB* 1123 (*CIJ* 690) to be either Jewish or non-Jewish. Nevertheless, the cumulative effect of all the components of these texts render the Jewish attribution of these manumissions very plausible (below, 2.2.3.1).

Other cases are even less clear. In 1897 Schürer published his influential article on the associations of worshippers of the Most High God on the Bosporus, where he maintained that they had emerged under Jewish influence. His arguments may be summed up as follows: the expression σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὕψιστον was almost a technical term in the literature of the Imperial period, and was used to designate non-Jews who performed some Jewish rites and professed a monotheistic religion; there were Jews in the Bosporan Kingdom; among the Tanais thiasotes there are seven persons bearing Jewish names. Nevertheless, Schürer acknowledged that the epithet *hypsistos* was also applied to pagan gods, such as Zeus, Attis, Sabazios, and Mithra. In his opinion, the trend toward monotheism, which was characteristic of the Imperial period, in conjunction with the Jewish propaganda, led to the emergence of the syncretic cult of *Theos Hypsistos*, an amalgam of paganism and Judaism. This opinion has been adopted by many scholars (Kulakovskiy 1898; Cumont 1914: 448; Juster 1914, 1: 274; Poland 1909: 179; Lake 1933: 89–93; Cook 1914–40, 1: 888; Nock 1961: 63; Gaydukevich 1949: 433–434; Lifshitz 1964; *GGR* 2: 664; Colpe 1967; Simon 1972: 376; Hengel 1974, 1: 308; 1980: 107). Some of Schürer's followers develop his balanced views to the extreme, claiming that Jewish proselytism was the leading factor in the emergence of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult on the Bosporus (Goodenough 1956/57; Nadel 1966; Levinskaya 1988).[4]

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[4] The recent book by I. Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (*The*

Stefani (1874: 229) and Pomyalovskiy (1888) consider the god of Tanais thiasotes as Zeus, since some stelae were decorated with the reliefs of eagles. Buzeskul (1927: 22), Novosadkiy (1928), and Kublanov (1958) sought Christian connections for the Bosporan synods of the Most High God.

Latyshev first identified *Theos Hypsistos* of the Bosporus as Sabazios (comm. to *IOSPE* II 246), basing his opinion on the so-called Pirot inscription (below, 2.3.2); later he accepted Schürer's approach (comm. to *IOSPE* IV 238). Salač (1955) connects the representation of the god on *CIRB* 1259 with the image of the Thracian horseman and maintains that the Most High God of Tanais revealed certain traits of Dionysos-Sabazios.

Rostovtzev, following Latyshev, suggests that *Theos Hypsistos* was Sabazios influenced by the Iranian conception of the solar deity (*ADZh* 429–432). Kochelenko, Blavatskiy (Kochelenko and Blawatsky 1966: 12–13; Blavatskiy 1974: 43), Shelov (1972: 280), and Boltunova (1991: 46) assume local Iranian connections for the cult.

Some authors, in their attempts to combine all possible approaches, arrive at an extremely eclectic position. Tacheva-Hitova (1978b), on the one hand, insists on the identification of the Bosporan *Theos Hypsistos* with Sabazios, in much more categorical terms than Rostovtzev does, while on the other hand she admits that a certain group of the worshippers of this god was affiliated with Judaism. Solomonik (1973a: 56) assumes that *Theos Hypsistos* united features of Yahweh, Zeus, Sabazios, and the Sarmatian divine horseman all together.

Currently, the idea that *Theos Hypsistos* was essentially Zeus has been rejected. Christian affiliation of the *Hypsistos*-cult is extremely improbable, primarily because it is in no way suggested by the evidence on this cult, but also since the first Christian monuments of the Bosporus appeared as late as the third–early fourth century AD, when the cult of *Theos Hypsistos* had already been established for two centuries (Gaydukevich 1949: 465; Kublanov 1958: 67–68; Blavatskiy 1964a: 201; Kruglikova 1970: 9).

Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, Vol. 5. Michigan, 1996), with a chapter devoted to the identification of *Theos Hypsistos* with the Jewish god, remained inaccessible to me. Judging by the review of this book by Paget (1997/98), Levinskaya does not modify substantially her opinion on "god-fearers" and the cult of the Most High God. I owe this reference to the kindness of Ephrat Habas-Rubin.

To summarize, three approaches prevail in current research. The adherents of the most widely supported approach consider *Theos Hypsistos* of the Bosporan inscriptions to be the god of Judaism. The second group of scholars recognizes the Thracian influence as decisive. Finally, the third direction is to search for the Iranian origins of the Most High God on the Bosporus.

CHAPTER ONE

CULT ASSOCIATIONS ON THE BOSPORUS

2.1.1 *The Collegia of Tanais*

2.1.1.1 *Membership and Organization*

More than twenty reasonably well preserved inscriptions of Tanais thiasotes, as well as a large number of fragments that belonged to such inscriptions, are known today. Most of them had been discovered in 1869–1870 in the same locality (Pomyalovskiy 1888: 24) and later re-examined and republished by Latyshev in *IOSPE* II and IV. Two fragments (*CIRB* 1266 and 1267) were first published in *CIRB*. One inscription that does not appear in *IOSPE* is extremely important: *CIRB* 1259 (plate 25; below, 2.1.1.3), first published by Knipovoch (1949: 117–118).

All the inscriptions of the synods[1] contain lists of thiasotes, headed by their officials. The number of members in the associations varies from about twenty-five to about fifty. They begin with the invocation *Agathe tyche*. Some stelae were erected as ex-votos, which is indicated by the phrase Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ εὐχή immediately after ’Αγαθῇ τύχῃ; some inscriptions were just addressed Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ. All of them are dated, and five are decorated with reliefs of eagles (plate 24; *CIRB* 1260, 1261, 1277, 1281, 1285). The majority of documents have βασιλεύοντος βασιλέως τοῦ δεῖνος φιλοκαίσαρος καὶ φιλορωμαίου as a preamble. Rostovtzev notes that "the tenor of all the inscriptions permits the supposition that the thiasoi were official religious associations, or in any case were recognized by the state" (*ADZh* 432).

Eagles holding wreaths and garlands in their beaks are represented on five stelae of the Tanais collegia. This decoration induced Schürer's (1897: 220) to qualify Tanais thiasotes as half-Gentile. However, depictions of eagles occurred in various religious contexts, including unequivocally Jewish monuments. A stone "eagle table," decorated with Roman eagles clutching thunderbolts, was discovered in the Sardis synagogue (Kraabel 1978: 22). Reliefs of eagles ornamented synagogues in the Golan (Urman 1995: figs. 28a, 44a, 50a), in the Galilee (Goodenough 1956/57: fig. 9), and in Yaffa (Goodenough 1956/57: fig. 10), as well as sarcophagi in the Jewish cemetery of Beth Shearim (Goodenough 1956/57: fig. 15).[2] On the other hand, eagles are the most common companions of Zeus and Jupiter, as well as of Baal Shamin, Jupiter Dolichenus, and other Eastern gods (Cook 1914–40, 2: 901; Merlat 1960: 108–110). Representations of eagles decorate monuments dedicated in Macedonia to Zeus *Hypsistos* (Tačeva-Hitova 1978a: 64–65), and in Thrace to Zeus Sabazios (*EC* Nos. 3.22, 23, pls. 51, 52) and Zeus *Hypsistos* (*EC* No. 4.20, pl. 69). Representations of eagles were offered to *Theos Hypsistos*, as well: in Philippopolis (Thracia, *EC* No. 4.13, pl. 67) and in Thyateira (Lydia, Kraabel 1969: 89). Depictions of eagles cannot therefore be used in attribution of a monument to a Jewish or pagan milieu.

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[1] These associations were never called συναγωγή, as Goodenough (1956/57: 224) erroneously states.

Exclusive male membership in the cult associations was normal in all the Bosporan cities. However, in Tanais all or almost all the free men apparently belonged to the collegia. About three hundred thiasotes who lived between AD 225 and 230, that is, in the best documented five years, are known by name. The total number of the inhabitants of Tanais was then 1500–2000 (to judge by the size of the city site); the number of adult males could not have exceeded 250–300 (Shelov 1972: 277–278). There is no reason to doubt that the situation was the same both earlier and later.[3] But if indeed this is the case, these corporations cannot be classified as regular private cult associations of the classical world, which have never embraced the entire civic community.[4]

The ethnic composition of the synods is mixed: only half of the names of thiasotes are Greek, and the overwhelming majority of the non-Greek half are of Iranian origin. In the third century AD the percentage of Greek and Roman names drops, while that of Iranian names increases (Shelov 1972: 276–278).

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[2] On two representations of Yahweh, one on a Phoenician coin of Gaza with an inscription *YHW* (Cook 1914–40, 1: 232, pl. 21) and the other on a gem with an inscription ΙΑΩ ΣΑΒΑΩ (Cook 1914–40, 1: 235, fig. 72), the Hebrew God, identified with solar Zeus, holds an eagle in his outstretched hand.

[3] Utterly untenable is therefore Goodenough's (1956/57: 232) conviction that Tanais collegia were "little communities."

[4] There are perhaps some exceptions to this rule, as for instance a short period when the Attic thiasoi might have been divisions of phratries (Ustinova 1988: 208–209).

As to the social status of thiasotes, they listed among them both rank-and-file *Tanaitai* and the city aristocracy[5] (Shelov 1972: 276).[6] Thus, the associations of worshippers of *Theos Hypsistos* in Tanais basically organized the entire citizen body into distinct groups, each of them with its strictly defined hierarchy. These groups probably also served as military divisions of the city (cf. Shkorpil 1908: 43–44; Blavatskiy 1964a: 213–214).[7]

In the extant inscriptions, there are four forms of designation of the associations:

- ἡ σύνοδος ἡ περὶ θεὸν ὕψιστον καὶ ἱερέα . . . καὶ . . . (*CIRB* 1278; 1279; 1280; 1282);
- ἡ σύνοδος ἡ περὶ ἱερέα . . . καὶ . . . (*CIRB* 1260; 1262; 1263; 1264; 1277; 1287; 1288);
- εἰσποιητοὶ ἀδελφοὶ σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὕψιστον περὶ πρεσβύτερον . . . (*CIRB* 1281; 1283; 1285; 1286);
- θίη[σος τῶν] ἀδελφ[ῶν] (*CIRB* 1284; θίησος is restored, but the titles of officials, characteristic of the thiasoi of *Theos Hypsistos*, are preserved).

Members of the associations designated in the first two ways were called θιασῶται (or θιεσεῖται, θιασεῖται, θιασῖται). Synods of thiasotes were much more numerous than corporations of *eispoietoi adelphoi*: while there are only four inscriptions of the latter, fifteen inscriptions can be doubtlessly ascribed to σύνοδοι θιασωτῶν.

The term *eispoietoi adelphoi* is controversial. The custom of collegia to call members "brethren" is well attested for the Imperial period (Nock 1924: 105–106). In Sinope (Pontus) *adelphoi* set up an ex-voto to *Theos Hypsistos*[8] (Cook 1914–40, 2: 883). There are several opinions on the meaning of the phrase *eispoietoi adelphoi*. Some scholars regard these "brothers" as members recently admitted to associations (Latyshev, comm. to *IOSPE* 2.247; Poland 1909: 284; Schürer 1897: 207). Zhebelyov (1940) compares the Tanais inscriptions with the Athenian sacred law of the association of *Iobacchoi* (*Syll.*[3] 1109), where members ἀπὸ πατρός and μὴ ἀπὸ πατρός did not enjoy equal rights. Since the word εἰσποιητός has the meaning "foster" (e.g., Is. 3.46; 3.50; 6.36; 9.2), Zhebelyov suggests considering *eispoietoi adelphoi* as members whose fathers did not belong to the organizations.[9]

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[5] Like Nibloboros son of Disymoxarthos, ἄρχων Ταναειτῶν (*CIRB* 1245, AD 220) and "father of the synod" (*CIRB* 1282, AD 228); Demetrios son of Apollonios, *epimeletes* of the city (*CIRB* 1248) and magistrate in two collegia (*CIRB* 1277, 1282); Chophrasmos son of Phorgabacos, *presbeutes* of the king (*CIRB* 1250, AD 236) and benefactor of the city (*CIRB* 1252; cf. Knipovich 1949: 94–97), priest in two synods.

[6] The opinions of Ziebarth (1896: 209–210) and Kolobova (1933a: 85–87) that the Tanais associations included mostly rich traders, and of Knipovich (1949: 107–109), that they united the city élite, are certainly inconsistent with the evidence. Gaydukevich (1949: 437) also described thiasotes as élite, but used the latter word in a much wider sense, implying free citizens as opposed to slaves and non-citizens.

[7] Shelov (1972: 276) agrees that a priori this role of the thiasoi is probable, but not sufficiently supported by the evidence.

However, many persons are registered as both thiasotes and *eispoietoi adelphoi*.[10] It is curious that nobody has ever appeared first as an *eispoietos adelphos*, and later as a thiasote (Knipovoch 1949: 105), and that among *eispoietoi adelphoi* there were sometimes high officials of synods (e.g. Euschemon, *CIRB* 1282; 1286). That means that *eispoietoi adelphoi* could not be new members of associations, awaiting promotion to the permanent status of a thiasote. To be sure, a person who enjoyed full membership in a certain synod could be accepted as an *eispoietos adelphos* elsewhere. A question may be posed: why should a respectable full member of a synod seek membership in a presumably second-rank corporation of μὴ ἀπὸ πατρός brothers? There were far fewer associations of *eispoietoi adelphoi* than synods, and people who were already thiasotes wished to become *adelphoi*. Perhaps the status of an *eispoietos adelphos* was considered more desirable, and their collegia a sort of élite?

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[8] The Pontus produced several dedications to the Most High God. A dedication to *Theos Hypsistos* also originates from Amastris (*SEG* 35.1322). In the same area *Theos Megas Hypsistos*, presumably a pagan deity (Robert 1958: 136), was venerated (Cook 1914–40, 2: 883).

[9] This opinion was adopted by Knipovich (1949: 105) and Gaydukevich (1949: 435–436).

[10] Sozomenos son of Styranos and Phourtas son of Agathous were thiasotes in Loos 228 (*CIRB* 1282). A month later, in Gorpiaios 228, they are *eispoietoi adelphoi* (*CIRB* 1283; cf. Zhebelyov 1940: 47), together with three more brothers, Eutyches son of Antimaches, Ariston son of Menestratos, and Dolosaces son of Symphoros, who had been recorded as thiasotes in AD 225 (*CIRB* 1279). Euschemon son of Menophilos, *philagathos* of a synod in AD 228 (*CIRB* 1282), was also listed among the *adelphoi* (*CIRB* 1286, AD 210's–220's). Pharnoxarthos son of Taureas, *epimeletes* in AD 220 (*CIRB* 1245), and Stratoneicos son of Moccos, were both thiasotes (*CIRB* 1282, AD 228) and *adelphoi* (*CIRB* 1286; early third century AD). Ardindianos son of Chrysippos, thiasote in AD 225 (*CIRB* 1280), must be identical to Ardinzianos son of Chrysippos, *adelphos* in AD 233/4 (*CIRB* 1285). The same may be suggested about Omphalacos son of Phazinamos (*CIRB* 1282), called son of Phadinamos in *CIRB* 1285. Heraclides son of Attas was mentioned in two early third-century AD inscriptions: of a synod (*CIRB* 1277) and of *eispoietoi adelphoi* (*CIRB* 1285).

Shelov (1972: 274–275) feels uneasy about this double membership, as well as about other questions: why do only adopted members call each other "brothers," while thiasotes never express fraternal feelings in their documents? Why do thiasotes and *eipoietoi adelphoi* never occur together in one list? Why do they have different officials? He therefore supposes that there were two types of associations, synods and organizations of *eispoietoi adelphoi*, all of them worshipping the same *Theos Hypsistos.*[11]

However, membership in two corporations was well-known in Tanais. There are numerous instances of membership in two synods, and not only of persons prominent in Tanais high society,[12] but simpler people,[13] as well. While nobody suggests ascribing two synods, to which one person belonged, to discrete types, it is illogical to infer different conclusions from the mere fact of double membership in the synods and in the collegia of *adelphoi.* Moreover, in *CIRB* 1284 (AD 230) the association is called θίη[σος τῶν] ἀδελφ[ῶν] in line 6, while in line 14 these "brothers" are referred to as [συν]οδείτας. The list of officials is normal for synods, not *eispoietoi adelphoi.* The inscription is unfortunately badly damaged, but the restoration of the cited words is reliable. Members of other Tanais synods did not use the word "brother" in official documents, but often had a

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[11] Tacheva-Hitova (1978b: 137) proposes dividing inscriptions of the Tanais collegia into three categories: those set up by a vow and containing the phrase *Agathe tyche* only occasionally; those which always begin with *Agathe tyche*, but do not mention the king's name; and those of *eispoietoi adelphoi.* However, she apparently needs this classification to fill the gap between the first group of thiasotes, who in her opinion worshipped a syncretistic pagan god, and the third one whom she regards as Jewish sympathizers also attracted by this pagan god. This approach is absolutely arbitrary.

[12] Chophrasmos son of Phorgabacos was registered as a priest in the inscriptions of two different associations, *CIRB* 1278 (AD 220) and *CIRB* 1279 (AD 225). Demetrios son of Apollonios was a *neaniskarchos* (*CIRB* 1277, early third century AD) and a *hiereus* (*CIRB* 1282, AD 228).

[13] Gosacos son of Aspacos (*CIRB* 1278, AD 220; 1279, AD 225); Balodis son of Demetrios (*CIRB* 1279, AD 225; *CIRB* 1281, AD 210/1–226/7); Soterіcos son of Poplios (*CIRB* 1279; 1282, AD 228); Euios son of Rhodon (*CIRB* 1277, early third century AD; 1278, AD 220); Alexandros son of Sogous (*CIRB* 1287, AD 244; *CIRB* 1288, the first half of the third century AD); Phadinamos son of Callistion (*CIRB* 1287, *CIRB* 1288); Asandros son of Thaumastos (*CIRB* 1278, AD 220; 1280, AD 225). Some of these people could be namesakes. It is also possible that in certain cases they moved from one association to another, but surely not all of them.

"father of the synod". To be sure, in Panticapaeum members of synods did call each other "brothers," which is attested by a tombstone erected by synodalists to honor τὸν ἴδιον ἀδελφόν (*CIRB* 104).[14] Both thiasotes (*CIRB* 1260a; 1261; 1277) and *adelphoi* (*CIRB* 1281; 1285) decorated their stelae with reliefs of eagles, wreaths, and garlands. The worshipped deity being one and the same in all the Tanais associations, it seems reasonable to regard all of these corporations as belonging to the same institution. The principle underlying the division remains obscure:[15] the paucity of sources prevents our precise understanding of the logic which must have been clear to the people of Tanais.

It has been also suggested that all the thiasotes of Tanais belonged to one and the same association (Kolobova 1933b: 73), which is impossible, since the rate of identical names in the lists, issued more or less simultaneously, is low (Knipovich 1949: 112–114; Shelov 1972: 272). Passage from one synod to another also cannot account for the recurrence of the same names in different groups, since sometimes they belong to the highest officials, as for instance Khophrasmos son of Phorgabacos, a priest in AD 220 and 225. It is highly improbable that such an important person as Khophrasmos, the priest of the collegium, left the first synod, made a swift career in the second one, and became a priest there, as well (Shelov 1972: 273). Thus, a number of collegia apparently existed in Tanais simultaneously, and all of them seem to have belonged to the same type of organization.

2.1.1.2 *Officials of the Collegia of Tanais*

Eispoietoi adelphoi were headed by one (*CIRB* 1286) or several (*CIRB* 1283) πρεσβύτεροι, whose functions are difficult to determine. In the Roman Mediterranean, the office of *presbyteros* occurs in Gentile, Jewish, and Christian contexts (Kraemer 1991: 148).

The hierarchy of officials in the synods was much more complex. *Cursus honorum* was firmly established: the order of magistrates in the inscriptions is fixed. There is not a single example of a person, having occupied a higher position, being demoted, or an official of any rank becoming later a simple thiasote (Knipovoch 1949: 104). On the contrary, there are many cases of promotions: Antimachos, son of Pasion, was a thiasote in AD 220 (*CIRB* 1278) and a *philagathos* in 225 (*CIRB* 1279); *neaniskarchos* Demetrios, son of Apollonios (*CIRB* 1277, before AD 210/1) later became a priest (*CIRB* 1282, AD 228); Euios son of Rhodon, a thiasote in the early third century AD (*CIRB* 1277), appears as a *paraphilagathos* in AD 220 (*CIRB* 1278).

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[14] Cf. a tombstone from Iluratum: . . . τῷ ἰδ[ίῳ ἀ]δε(λ)φῷ . . . (*CIRB* 967).

[15] Just as the reason for the division of the city population into *Tanaitai* and *Hellenes, Tanaitai* bearing Greek names, and the existence of *Hellenarchai* with non-Greek patronymics (below, 2.4.1).

Hiereus is always mentioned first in all the inscriptions. The presence of priests implies offering sacrifices to the Most High God. For Schürer (1897: 220), the existence of priests in the Tanais collegia is incompatible with orthodox Judaism—sacrifices could only be offered in the Jerusalem temple; sacrificial practices performed by Jews after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 were prohibited. However, Jewish sympathizers, who had not undergone conversion and therefore were not subject to all the demands of the Law, appear to have been permitted to offer sacrifices to Heaven even outside the Temple, as second–third-century AD rabbinical discussions in the Mishnah and the Tosefta demonstrate (Bickerman 1958: 162–164; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 64). Their sacrificial practices, performed on private altars, were taken for granted by rabbis and were known to the Roman authorities (Joseph. *Ant.* 14.10.24; cf. Juster 1914, 1: 354; Bickerman 1958: 151–153; Siegert 1973: 141; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 65). A member of the community, entitled *hiereus*,[16] appears in an inscription discovered in the Sardis synagogue (Kraabel 1978: 30).[17] Thus, this very office which seemed such a grave obstacle to Schürer himself, in fact does not contradict his theory.[18] Needless to say, it certainly does not support it, for sacrifices were the sine qua non of pagan worship.

In some inscriptions (*CIRB* 1263; 1277; 1282; 1288) *hiereus* is followed by πατὴρ συνόδου, whose exact responsibilities are unknown.

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[16] And *sophodidaskalos*, a word which Kraabel (1978: 30) tentatively translates as "teacher of wisdom" or "rabbi."

[17] Whether ἱερεύς is listed among the donors in the Aphrodisias synagogue inscription (below, 2.2.1.2) in the erased lines A 26–27 is disputable (Williams 1992: 299, 306).

[18] The theoretical possibility that the word ἱερεύς is a translation of the Hebrew כהן, "priest," as it was in Aphrodisias (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 30) and elsewhere, is untenable in Tanais: people having barbarian names and/or patronymics cannot belong to the descendants of Jerusalem priestly families. Goodenough (1956/57: 226), who cites occurrences of priests bearing Jewish names in the inscriptions from Jerusalem, Rome, and Delos, as parallel to the case of Tanais, is certainly misleading.

The existence of a "father" and "brothers" in the Tanais collegia demonstrates that thiasotes regarded themselves as a family, at least to a certain extent. The desire to introduce a family atmosphere in the life of associations was widespread in the Imperial period.[19] In different societies there was, however, considerable variability in notions about a father's vocation, hence the precise social and psychological meaning of this term in the Tanais synods remains obscure.[20]

There was a *synagogos* in every association. Hesychios (s.v. συναγωγός) defined *synagogos* as συνέστιος, ὁμοτράπεζος, so his responsibilities may have been connected with the organization of the sacrificial feasts (Foucart 1873: 242). Suida's explanation of the word ἀρχισυναγωγός· ὁ ἀρχηγός (s.v.) may imply that the *synagogos* was a founder or organizer of a collegium (Poland 1909: 272; 1932: 1318). The *synagogos* could also have been a manager of the finances and property of the synod. In most associations the *synagogos* was the highest or one of the highest officials (Poland 1932: 1320). Members of the association of Σαββατισταί in Cilicia, which was headed by a *synagogeus*, were certainly Jewish semi-proselytes (Ziebarth 1896: 55; Poland 1932: 1318), and there were *archisynagogoi* in some Jewish synagogues (Poland 1932: 1317; Leon 1960: 171). In the Greek world, however, private associations, which had a *synagogos* as one of their officials (Poland 1909: 356–357; 1932), usually worshipped various pagan deities: Heracles, Heros, Harpocrates, Isis, etc. An *archisynagogos* was one of the magistrates of a collegium worshipping *theos* Zeus *Hypsistos* at Pydna (Macedonia, Cormack 1974).

On the Bosporus, the office of *synagogos* existed already in the second century BC: a *synagogos* headed the thiasotes who offered the stele *CIRB* 75 to Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa*. In AD 82 the *synagogos* was the highest official of the thiasotes of Zeus and Hera *Soteres* (*CIRB* 76). The thiasos of Gorgippian ship owners, who repaired the temple of Poseidon and erected there statues in the late second–early third century AD (*CIRB* 1234), was headed by a priest and a

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[19] For *pater* in cult associations see Poland 1909: 372; Nock 1924: 105.

[20] A comparison with the *pater* of the Mithraic mysteries inevitably comes to mind, but in this case extreme caution is necessary, for the *pater* of the Mithraists held the first, and not the second, place in the hierarchy. Tanais corporations seem to be related to the Mithraic associations only through their common Iranian precursors (below, 2.4.3).

Novosadskiy, in the terms of his hypothesis, compares *pateres* in Tanais with the fathers in the Christian communities (1928: 64).

synagogos, like the Tanais synods. Hence, the office of *synagogos* was common in the private cult associations of the Bosporus and existed in collegia having different divine patrons. It cannot be referred to any particular feature of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult.

The posts of *philagathos* and *paraphilagathos* have aroused many conjectures. In the opinion of Pomyalovskiy (1888: 27), they were functionaries who dealt with common meals, but his argumentation is hardly convincing. According to Novosadskiy (1928: 65), the *philagathos* supervised the morals of thiasotes and exercised control over admission of new members.[21] The importance of these functions explains the existence of the *philagathos*' assistant to Knipovich (1949: 112) and Gaydukevich (1949: 435).

Salač (1955: 218) suggests that the conduct of thiasotes was under the surveillance of *synagogoi*. Assuming Schürer's views on the extent of Jewish influence on the cult of *Theos Hypsistos*, and emphasizing the non-collegial nature of the offices of *philagathos* and *paraphilagathos* in the Hellenic world, he contrasts them with the Jewish officials, active both in Palestine and the Diaspora, who were called גבאי צדקה. The word צדקה means both justice and charity dues. It was established that these dues were to be raised only by two officials together. In Salač's view, the collegial nature of this office allows a similar interpretation of the functions of *philagathos* and *paraphilagathos* in Tanais (1955: 218).

A *philagathos* appears in the dedication to Zeus and Hera *Soteres* from Panticapaeum (*CIRB* 76); this office can be found in Gentile associations of Asia Minor (Pomyalovskiy 1888: 27).[22] Be it not very often, one may encounter both charity[23] (W. S. Ferguson 1944: 139) and supervision over the morals of the members (*Syll.*^{3} 985; cf. Barton and Horsley 1981: 19–21) in Gentile private cult associations at the turn of the Christian era. Thus, the office of *philagathos* was not restricted to the collegia worshipping the Most High God, and there is no reason to connect it with any cult specifically.

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[21] An epitaph of two thiasotes from Phanagoria describes the deceased as ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί (*CIRB* 987, first century AD).

[22] Noteworthy is the adverb φιλαγάθως: τῷ τε Σαρ]άπει λαχῶν ἱερεύς . . . τοῖς δαπ[ανήμασιν ἀνεστράφ]ῃ καλῶς καὶ φιλαγάθως (*IGB* I^2 13). Here φιλαγάθως may be interpreted as pertinent to the fair distribution of money, as well as characterizing the piety and generosity of the honored person.

[23] On the possibility that there was an *orphanophylax* among the officials of thiasotes in Gorgippia, see below, 2.1.2.2.

The offices of *gymnasiarchos* and *neaniskarchos* are unanimously asserted to be related to ephebic activities. Yet both the Greek palaestra and gymnasium had disappeared from life in the Bosporan Kingdom already by the beginning of the Christian era. In burials, articles of *palaestrites*' use were replaced by weapons (Rostovtzev 1918: 174). No traces of a gymnasium have ever been found in the semi-Sarmatic Tanais. Besides, *gymnasiarchoi* are mentioned among members of private cult associations very seldom.[24] Hence, the responsibilities of the *gymnasiarchos* and the *neaniskarchos* in Tanais probably deviated from what was customary in other places (below, 2.4.3).

In some associations there was also a *grammateus* (*CIRB* 1263; 1264 (?); 1268). Synods therefore had official records, which indicates a considerable sophistication in their bookkeeping and proceedings in general.

In one inscription, *CIRB* 1277, φίλ[ος τῆς συ]νόδου is the last in the list of the officials. If the restoration suggested by the editors of *CIRB* is correct, this "friend of the synod" may have been a benefactor of the corporation, or a person who had rendered it some important services.

2.1.1.3 *The Stele Commemorating the Day of Tanais*

One inscription of the Tanais thiasotes differs substantially from all the rest. *CIRB* 1259 was found on the site of Tanais in 1913 (Knipovich 1949: 117–118). Since then this stele has been discussed in the majority of works on the cult of the Most High God, and on Bosporan history in general.[25]

The inscription, dated AD 104, reads as follows:[26]

> Βασιλεύοντος βασιλ[έ]ως Τιβερίου Σαυρομάτου| φιλοκαίσαρος καὶ φιλο|ρωμαίου, εὐσε|βοῦς, ἔτους αυ΄ ἄ[γ]οντες θ.| ἡμέραν Ταναίδος μηνὶ ’Α|πελλαίου αι΄[27] περὶ (ἱε)ρέα Ξένων| Ἔρωτος καὶ συναγωγὸν Γάιον| Χαρίτωνος καὶ φιλάγαθο[ν] Νεικόστρατον β΄ καὶ παρ[α]|φιλάγαθον Εὔπορον Μακά[ρ]ου καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν θιεσειτῶν| (13 names).

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[24] In the examples cited by Oehler (1910: 2003) they always belong to associations of non-citizens, who were not admitted to city gymnasia.

[25] However, some scholars studying the Bosporan cult of *Theos Hypsistos* either ignore this monument (Goodenough 1956/57; Nadel 1966) or mention it only briefly as entirely irrelevant to the subject (Levinskaya 1988).

[26] Text of the *CIRB*; for different versions see: Knipovich 1949: 117–118; Salač 1955: 214–215.

[27] Οἱ περὶ, κ.τ.λ.: Knipovich 1949: 117; Salač 1955: 214. The editors of *CIRB* saw A on the stone, reading therefore ’Α|πελλαίου αι΄, "on Apellaios 11," and not

> In the reign of Tiberios Sauromates, friend of the Caesar and of Romans, pious, in the year 401 (of the Bosporan era, AD 104), celebrating the ninth(?) day of Tanais, in the month of Apellaios, 11: headed by the priest Xenon son of Eros, and *synagogos* Gaios son of Chariton, and *philagathos* Neicostratos son of Neicostratos, and *paraphilagathos* Euporos son of Macaros, and of other thiasotes . . . (13 names).

The stele is decorated with a relief representing a horseman mounted on a standing horse (plate 25). An altar blazes in front of the cavalier, and behind the altar there is a tree. The horseman has long hair and a beard; he is dressed in the Sarmatian fashion, in pants, a coat, and a cloak, and holds a rhyton in his right hand.

As the god is not named in the inscription, opinions on his identification vary. Knipovich (1949: 118) was inclined to consider him the river god Tanais. The association was in her opinion a *Festverein*, organized for the celebration of one festival only. Arsen'yeva, Böttger, and Vinogradov (1996: 69) also tend to consider the god as Tanais, and the stele as commemorating the restoration of the city under Sauromates I.

Shelov, following Boltunova, points out that the list of officials was followed by a genitive phrase, καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν θιεσειτῶν, while normally a nominative phrase καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ θιασεῖται was used (Shelov 1972: 274). This genetive might be partitive and mean that the Day of Tanais was celebrated not by all the thiasotes but by a certain group, and that the thiasos had not been founded exclusively for the celebration but had some other purposes, the attendance at the festival (or probably its organization) being entrusted to this particular team. However, the same construction occurs also in a list of thiasotes from Tanais, *CIRB* 1262 (the reason for erecting this stele is unclear, since the beginning of this inscription has not been preserved), and on a number of Panticapaeum tombstones, set up by synods for their deceased members (*CIRB* 87; 88; 89; 90; 97; 98). Either in all these instances only some of the thiasotes contributed to the case in question (cf. Saprykin and Chevelyov 1996: 165), or this construction was common in Bosporan inscriptions, and hence its use in *CIRB* 1259 is meaningless, which seems more plausible.[28]

οἱ περὶ (ἱε)ρέα, "(thiasotes) headed by the priest." This A is in fact seen quite clearly on a good photo of the relevant part of the inscription, published by Boltunova (1964: fig. 3). The resulting grammatical inconsistency was in no way exceptional for Tanais.

[28] The editors of *CIRB* consider genetival constructions equivalent to nominal (comm. to *CIRB* 88). The reason for the use of this construction could simply be

Salač (1955: 221–222) observes that river deities have never been depicted as horsemen, and since the list of officials corresponds to that of the synods of *Theos Hypsistos*, the relief is to be regarded as the image of this god. This opinion is adopted by Boltunova (1964: 206) and Blavatskiy (1974: 43).

Arsen'yeva, Böttger, and Vinogradov (1996: 71) suggest that the horseman depicted on the stele is king Sauromates I. This view is based on the hypothesis of these authors that Sauromates initiated the restoration of the city and attended in person the celebration of the accomplishment of this project, which is thus far absolutely ungrounded.

The stele with the relief is indeed the most ancient of the monuments left by the thiasotes of Tanais. The next extant document of an association (*CIRB* 1260) was issued about 50 years later, in AD 155. However, the cult of *Theos Hypsistos* in the Tanais River delta is attested by a dedication θ[εῶ]ι ὑψίστω[ι] ἐπεκόωι, dated by its script to the early first century AD (*CIRB* 1316; Boltunova 1964: 200). The slab was found in Rostov-on-Don, but was in all probability brought there from the nearby site of ancient Tanais, the modern village of Nedvigovka (Boltunova 1964: 200).[29] The dedication to the Most High God, Heedful, was set up by two brothers, Bion and Theodoros(?) sons of Phannes, after they had been rescued from great perils (σωθέντες ἐκ μεγάλων κινδύνων). Thus, the cult of *Theos Hypsistos* surely existed in the first century AD on the Bosporus, and very likely, in Tanais.

Mid-second century dedications of thiasotes to *Theos Hypsistos, CIRB* 1260 and *CIRB* 1260a (154/5–170/1), already attest to a completely crystallized organization, which must have emerged much earlier than in the AD 150's. The hierarchy of synods which erected *CIRB* 1260 and 1260a, as well as more recent Tanais thiasote inscriptions, is identical to that of *CIRB* 1259. Therefore the thiasotes who celebrated the day of Tanais in AD 104 belonged in all probability to the same cult with the identical organization of devotees.[30] It is most

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ignorance of elementary grammar. In fact, on a Panticapaeum tombstone (*CIRB* 99, AD 221) the dative is used instead of the nominative: ἡ σύνοδος ἡ περὶ ἱερέα . . . καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς συνοδείτοις . . . ἀνέστησαν τὴν στ(ή)λην . . .

[29] The possibility that the stone was brought to Rostov-on-Don from Panticapaeum cannot be ruled out absolutely, but it is certainly much less likely.

[30] A similar approach is cautiously suggested by Arsen'yeva, Böttger, and Vinogradov (1996: 69).

unlikely that in the town, where all the numerous cult associations worshipped *Theos Hypsistos*, an official document commemorating the Day of Tanais could have been issued by adherents of another deity without an indication of his name. The absence of the god's name or *epiklesis* demonstrates that everybody knew perfectly well who was the god of the thiasotes. Besides, his image was also present on the stele.[31]

Finally, Levinskaya (1988: 15) argues that there are no anthropomorphic representations on the monuments of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult in the entire Graeco-Roman world. But in Thrace, in the shrine of the local *Theos Hypsistos*, a relief representing a bust of the god, carried by an eagle, was found together with a number of dedications to that god (*EC* No. 4: 3, pl. 64). A dedication to *Theos Hypsistos* from Lydia is inscribed on a stele with a relief of a seated figure (Robert 1958: 112; below, 2.2.2.2). In the Pisidian Termessos, the text of a dedication to *Theos Hypsistos epekoos* stated that the stone, set up by divine order, was "with the god's foot on top" (σὺν τῷ ἔποντι ἴχνει θεοῦ)—and it actually carried a statue of a foot (*TAM* 3.1.32; cf. Mitchell 1995, 2: 50; below, 2.2.2.2).

Thus, thiasotes celebrating the Day of Tanais were in all probability adherents of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult, like absolutely all the other members of the Tanais cult associations. The implications of this attribution of the stele for the definition of the nature of the Bosporan *Hypsistos* cult are discussed in Chapter 4.

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[31] Salač (1955: 223) observes that an anthropomorphic image appears on the oldest, early second century AD, stele of Tanais thiasotes; in the mid-second–early third centuries AD they sometimes ordered eagles to be depicted on their monuments, and later set up plain stones. This process reflects the general deterioration in arts and craftsmanship, which is characteristic of the late Bosporus. Noteworthy, eagles on the earlier stelae (*CIRB* 1260; 1261, mid-second century AD, and even *CIRB* 1277, 173/4–210/1 AD) are sculpted in a much more realistic manner than those on later monuments (*CIRB* 1281; 1285, first decades of the third century AD), which are rather schematic. Drawings of the five stelae with eagles are reproduced by Goodenough 1956/7: figs. 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 (*CIRB* 1261; 1260; 1281; 1285; 1277, respectively).

2.1.2 *Thiasotes from Other Cities of the Bosporus*

2.1.2.1 *Thiasotes of Panticapaeum*

The worshipped deity is indicated only in two inscriptions of the Panticapaeum synods. One stele was offered to Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* (*CIRB* 75, second century BC), and the second to Zeus and Hera *Soteres* (*CIRB* 76, AD 82). The former inscription was set up by a *synagogos* and thiasotes; the latter lists *synagogos, philagathos, epimeletes*, and thiasotes.

The rest of the inscriptions of thiasotes from Panticapaeum are on tombstones, erected by the synods for the memory of their deceased members. As to the composition of officials, it varies: some synods were headed by the same magistrates as the collegia of Tanais: *hiereus, synagagos, philagathos, paraphilagathos*, and *gymnasiarchos* are listed in *CIRB* 90 (mid-second century AD), *CIRB* 91 and 92 (both second century AD).[32] Other collegia were headed by a *hiereus* and a *pater synodou*, with or without a *synagagos*, a *philagathos*, a *paraphilagathos*, a *gymnasiarchos*, or a *neaniskarchos: CIRB* 95; 96 (second century AD); 98 (AD 214); 99 (AD 221); 103; 104; 105 (third century AD).[33] Certain synods had a *synagogos* as their highest official: *CIRB* 79; 83; 84; 86; 89; 93 (second century AD). In some corporations a *pragmatas*[34] (*CIRB* 79; 80; 81) or a *grammateus* (*CIRB* 93) were mentioned in the last place in the list of officials. The Panticapaeum synods lacked the strict uniformity of the Tanais associations. However, with the exception of a *pragmatas*, all the offices that were mentioned in the inscriptions of the Panticapaeum collegia existed also in Tanais, and their order in *cursus honorum* was essentially the same.

The thiasotes of Panticapaeum, unlike their Tanais colleagues, recorded incomplete lists of members, including officials only; hence there is much less material for their prosopographic study. Double membership, which was so common in the Tanais associations, can be supposed only in one case in Panticapaum: two tombstones, *CIRB* 80 and 81, both from the early second century AD, were set up by two synods in the memory of Mastous son of Mastous. It has been suggested that Mastous belonged to two associations (*IOSPE* II, comm. to Nos. 61, 62; *KW*, comm. to Nos. 454, 455; Shelov 1972: 273), but since this name was not rare, two namesakes could have born it.

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[32] *CIRB* 91 and 92 are broken, and feature only the beginning of the list.

[33] *Gymnasiarchos* and *neaniskarchos* are mentioned on a newly published fragmentary Panticapaeum tombstone (Saprykin and Chevelyov 1996: 161).

[34] Probably the financial administrator of the association (Poland 1909: 378; Novosadskiy 1928: 68).

The social standing of the Panticapaeum thiasotes resembles the situation in Tanais: while the majority of thiasotes are unknown otherwise, some were prominent persons: Daphnos son of Psycharion (*CIRB* 78) and Julius son of Sambion, *pater synodou* (*CIRB* 98) were called ὁ ἐπὶ αὐλῆς, "chamberlains." Outstanding thiasotes could be rewarded with special honors: they could be accorded lifelong (διὰ βίου) offices or awarded a gold wreath. This custom, rather common in private cult associations (Ziebarth 1896: 174) is attested by a gold plate with an inscription (Shkorpil 1908: 43):

> Τὸ κοίνον τῶν θιασιτῶν στεφανοῦσι Ἰούλιον Καλλισθένην παραφιλάγαθον διὰ βίου τειμῆς χάριν
>
> The association of thiasotes crowns Julius Callisthenes, lifelong *paraphilagathos*, for his honor.

Only one epitaph of a thiasote is metric: a first-century AD tombstone of Lysimachos, son of Gasteis (*CIRB* 137). In its three elegiac couplets, not a single official has been mentioned, and the only indicator of the connection between the deceased and a collegium is the phrase ἥλικες (οἱ) θιέσου, referring to his friends. May these "comrades of the same age" be compared to "brothers," as reflecting the same socio-psychological phenomenon?

The majority of second-century AD tombstones of the Panticapaeum thiasotes (*CIRB* 78; 80; 81; 83; 84; 87; 88; 90; 91) are decorated with reliefs of warriors, either horsemen or foot soldiers, dressed in a non-classical fashion (plate 28).[35] The composition of the synods is exclusively male. A number of scholars (Shkorpil 1908: 43–44; Blavatskiy 1964a: 213–214; Rostovtzev 1989b: 201; 1989c: 128) suggest that in Panticapaeum they were connected with the military organization of the citizens. To be sure, the war-like subjects of the reliefs, male membership, and physical training organized by the associations, which is implied by the presence of *gymnasiarchoi* and *neaniskarchoi*, justify this opinion.

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[35] Photographs of these stelae were published in *KW*. The absence of the reliefs on the third-century AD tombstones may be due either to a change in fashion, or to the already mentioned general deterioration in artistic performance.

2.1.2.2 *Thiasoi in Other Cities of the Cimmerian Bosporus*

Synods and thiasoi were also active outside Panticapaeum. They reveal one common feature: not a single woman has ever been listed among their members. Otherwise, the nature and contents of their documents vary from tombstones to dedications and commemorative inscriptions. They list different teams of magistrates and mention several gods. While some offices (*hiereus, synagogos, philagathos*) may be encountered almost in all the associations, other magistratures are specific to corporations worshipping a certain deity only. Hence, only these magistratures can serve as indicators of the affiliation of the corporations in question with a certain deity, when the name of the deity does not appear on the stone.

Tombstones of thiasotes erected by synods were discovered in Cimmericum (*CIRB* 946, third century AD or earlier), Iluratum (*CIRB* 967, mid-second century AD), Phanagoria (*CIRB* 987, first century AD), and in the modern village of Akhtanizovskaya (*CIRB* 1016, third century AD or later). Associations from Cimmericum and Iluratum are likely to be similar to the Panticapaeum synods. The thiasotes from Myrmecaeum, whose fragmentary inscription mentions a *neaniskarchos* (*CIRB* 870), may also be included in that category.

Attribution of the Phanagorian tombstone of four thiasotes is uncertain: the deceased are called ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί, which calls to mind the post of *philagathos*, which existed in collegia worshipping different deities. The stele from the village of Akhtanizovskaya seems to have been erected by an association worshipping Aphrodite. The village is situated on the bank of the Akhtanizov salt lake, where the dedication of Comosarye and other monuments were found (above, 1.1.1.7). The inscription of the thiasos lists *hiereus, hieromastor*, and *philagathos*. A fragment (*CIRB* 988, first century AD), mentioning *hiereus* and *hieromastor*, was discovered in Phanagoria, the great center of the Aphrodite *Ourania* cult. A Hermonassa thiasos (*CIRB* 1054, above 1.3.1.1), which also listed a *hieromastor* among its members, presumably honored Aphrodite. In fact, the office of *hieromastor* has never yet occurred in the inscriptions of collegia worshipping other deities. A thiasos naming Aphrodite as its patroness was active in Hermonassa in the second century AD (*CIRB* 1055). The provenance of all the discussed inscriptions from the area where the cult of Aphrodite *Ourania* has always been predominant adds weight to the suggested considerations in favor of the association of these documents with the cult of Aphrodite.

In Gorgippia an association of ship-owners (θέασος ναυκλήρων) worshipping Poseidon (*CIRB* 1134) was active in the second half of the second century AD (Kolobova 1933b: 48–98; Zhebelyov 1934: 45–56). It was headed by a *hiereus*, a *synagogos*, a *phrontistes*, and an administrator of sacred affairs—ἱερῶν οἰκονόμος. A number of second-century AD fragments of thiasotes' inscriptions, containing no indication of the worshipped deity, were also discovered in Gorgippia (*CIRB* 1129–1133; 1135–1136). The officials of these thiasotes were: *hiereus, phrontistes, synagogos, hieron oikonomos*, and in two cases *orphanophylax* (*CIRB* 1129; 1130?).[36] It seems plausible that these collegia were also associated with the cult of Poseidon, since all of them list the same officials (with the exception of the *orphanophylax*).

A second-century AD list of names, mentioning *Theos Hypsistos* twice (*CIRB* 1231), in all probability also originates from Gorgippia (comm. to *IOSPE* IV 436 and *CIRB* 1231).

Thus, Bosporan thiasoi and synods worshipped several gods: *Theos Hypsistos*, Aphrodite *Ourania*, Zeus and Hera *Soteres*, and Poseidon. It is obvious that the associations were far from being homogenous.

Nevertheless, the synods of all the Bosporan cities are usually regarded as a single phenomenon, and observations which fit one type only were applied to all. It has even been suggested that all the thiasoi of the Bosporus be regarded as branches of a single association (Kolobova 1933b: 75). Shelov is thus far the only writer who has questioned the consensus (1972: 272). He argues that there were considerable distinctions between the Panticapaeum and the Tanais collegia. In fact, all the synod inscriptions from Panticapaeum and elsewhere, where the worshipped deity is not indicated, occurred on tombstones only. These corporations have left no ex-votos, and no dedications, as the thiasotes of Tanais did. On the other hand, the thiasotes of Tanais, worshipping *Theos Hypsistos*, have not left a single tombstone.

Other observations of Shelov on this subject (1972: 172) are not incontestable. He maintains that only in Tanais can one find *presbyteroi* and *adelphoi*. But in Panticapaeum (*CIRB* 104, first half of the third century AD) and in Iluratum (*CIRB* 967, mid-second century AD) members of a synod named their deceased colleague "brother": ὁ ἴδιος ἀδελφός. As to the remarks concerning the difference in the ethnic composition of the Panticapaeum and Tanais synods, this discrepancy reflects the general contrast between the populations of Panticapaeum and of Tanais, the latter much more barbarized. The prevalence of the indigenous customs probably accounts for the lack of care about inscribed tombstones among the Tanais thiasotes: thus far, the city of Tanais has produced only one epitaph (*CIRB* 1299). Yet there is no explanation for the failure of the Panticapaeum thiasotes to erect a single stele that was not a tombstone.

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[36] Latyshev (comm. to *IOSPE* IV 434) and the editors of *CIRB* (comm. to *CIRB* 1129) are uncertain as to whether the *orphanophylax* was a magistrate of the association or of the city (cf. Poland 1909: 405). The titles and state offices of the thiasotes are usually mentioned in the inscriptions of the Bosporan collegia. To be sure, the whole word appears only once (*CIRB* 1129); its restoration in *CIRB* 1130 is far from certain.

Thus, there are arguments both pro and contra the attribution of the Tanais and Panticapaeum collegia to the same institution. However, as demonstrated above, associations worshipping different gods reveal considerable dissimilarity in the composition of their magistrates. The only two types which had essentially identical teams of magistrates were the Panticapaeum and Tanais synods. Only there the members were called "brothers;" a *pater synodou*, a *gymnasiarchos*, and a *neaniskarchos* were active only in these corporations. The last two offices are especially important, for they indicate the concern about the fitness of the members, which was extremely unusual in private associations in general and did not exist in other Bosporan collegia. On the other hand, this particular aspect was very important in the military service, which is implied directly by the reliefs decorating the tombstones, and indirectly by the total adherence of all the Tanais citizens to the synods. The extent to which the phenomenon was spread in Tanais, Panticapaeum, and some minor towns serves as an additional argument in favor of the close proximity of these collegia: they seem to belong to a wide network of similar organizations. The absence of the god's name on the tombstones perhaps may be explained by the very nature of the monuments; absolute compliance between epitaphs and dedicatory inscriptions certainly cannot be expected. It is therefore most probable that the Tanais collegia and the associations that set up tombstones for their deceased members in Panticapaeum and elsewhere were similar in nature and worshipped the same deity, namely *Theos Hypsistos*.

2.1.3 *Conclusions*

During the first–fourth centuries AD the cult associations of the Bosporus worshipped several gods. When the name of a deity is not preserved, collegia of adepts of different cults may in most cases be distinguished by the titles of their officials. The stronghold of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult was Tanais, where all or almost all male citizens belonged to synods revering this god. The developed hierarchy the Tanais synods contains some offices which can scarcely be interpreted in terms of private cult associations of the Graeco-Roman world. The Most High God was probably conceived as a horseman, as attested by a stele set up by a group of Tanais thiasotes. *Theos Hypsistos* appears to be the god worshipped by the thiasotes of Panticapaeum and other Bosporan cities and towns.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOS HYPSISTOS AND JUDAISM

2.2.1 *Jewish Sympathizers?*

Schürer suggested a Jewish connection for *Theos Hypsistos*; later advocates of his approach have not added new arguments of substantial importance. In their opinion, the phrase σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὕψιστον designated Jewish semi- or quasi-proselytes all over the Mediterranean, disregarding the context. This conviction has, however, been challenged: the question under discussion is, using the apt words of Lake (1933: 84), "to what extent φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν is a technical description of the non-Jewish fringe attending the Synagogue, or is merely an honorable epithet applicable to Jew, Gentile, or Proselyte, as the context may decide."

In terms of Jewish law, the word "semi-proselyte" is senseless (Moore 1927: 326; Lake 1933: 76; Siegert 1973: 163), Feldman (1950: 200), therefore, prefers the designation "sympathizer." But what kind of reality lay behind this conventional nomination? There is no doubt that pagans came to the synagogues, attracted by their teaching and practice.[1] However, there is an air of vagueness about the definition of the Jewish sympathizers, both in the classical and the rabbinical literature (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 58–59; Cohen 1989: 33).[2] Gentiles interested in Judaism could simply study its teachings, adopt monotheism as a kind of philosophy, or visit the synagogue and imitate the Jewish way of life to whatever degree, observing some regulations, but not converting (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 65).[3]

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[1] The literature on the "god-fearers" is enormous. See especially: Lake 1933; Feldman 1950; 1986; 1989; 1992; 1993: 342–382; Robert 1964: 39–45; Romaniuk 1964; Siegert 1973; Stern 1974–84: 103–107; Kraabel 1981; Wilcox 1981; MacLennan and Kraabel 1986; Millar 1986; Overman 1992; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987; Kant 1987: 687–690. For a fuller bibliography see Feldman 1993: 569, note 1.

[2] For an analysis of different aspects in "crossing the boundary and becoming a Jew," with an emphasis on the stages preceding full conversion see: Cohen 1989.

[3] Indeed, during the first centuries AD even such categories as "Jew" and "Christian" were far from being clearly defined. As Kee (1992: 184) emphasizes,

For decades most scholars regarded the phrases σεβόμενοι (φοβούμενοι) τὸν θεόν, θεοσεβεῖς in Greek, or *metuentes* in Latin as technical terms which designated Gentiles who connected themselves with Judaism, but did not convert. For the supporters of this approach, "god-fearers" attended the synagogue, professed monotheism in the biblical sense, observed some requirements of the Law, and formed a considerable social group (Moore 1927: 323–325; Flusser 1976: 1097–1098; Avi-Yonah 1976: 37; Hengel 1974, 1: 313; Kuhn and Stegemann 1962; Lifshitz 1971; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 51; Millar 1992: 101). These Gentiles who embraced monotheism were further considered inclined to become Christians and propagate the new faith.[4]

The point which is crucial for the present study is not the extent of this phenomenon.[5] The question is whether the phrase *sebomenoi* or *phoboumenoi ton theon* was a technical term for the designation of this category. The studies of Lake (1933), Feldman (1950), and Kraabel (1981) demonstrate that in this case we are dealing with a scientific prejudice, steadily re-appearing in handbooks and monographs.

2.2.1.1 *Literary Evidence*

Until recently, the entire construction rested upon the following passages in Acts, mentioning either *sebomenos* or *phoboumenos*: 10.2; 10.22; 10.35; 13.16; 13.26; 13.43; 13.50; 16.14; 17.4; 17.17; 18.7.[6] Other occurrences of these expressions in literature and epigraphy were

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"the serious modern investigator of Christian origins or pre-rabbinic Judaism cannot even responsibly use terms like 'Jew' and 'Christian' as though they had unambiguous, self-evident meaning." Cf. Kraemer 1992.

[4] For a discussion see: Wilcox 1981: 102–103; Finn 1985: 75–76; Goodman 1994.

[5] For a survey of this subject see: Feldman 1986; 1992: 373–375; 1993: 342–382; Will and Orrieux 1992.

[6] *Codex Bezae* of the Latin Bible renders σεβόμενος by *Coelicola* twice: *Acta* 13.50 and 17.4 (Schürer 1897: 224). It has been supposed that the word *Coelicola*, "Heaven-worshipers," is the Latin equivalent of the Talmudic יראי שׁמים, "fearers of Heaven" (Feldman 1989: 277).

Suppression of a cult of *Coelicolae* in Africa in the early fifth century AD is mentioned in *Codex Theodosianus*. Theodosius however merely knew that their sect had to be prohibited, and that they *nescio cuius dogmatis novi conventus habent* (16.5.43) and *Judaeorum nomen induere* (16.8.19). Augustine (*Epist.* 44.13), who mentioned *novi apud eos baptismi institutorem exstitisse et multos illo sacrilegio seduxisse*, did not specify what was the essence of the beliefs of *Coelicolae*. Their comparison to the Cappadocian *Hypsistarii* and Jewish sympathizers (Schürer 1987: 223; Cumont 1914: 446; Feldman 1989: 277) is far from being unequivocal (Lake 1933: 95).

interpreted, proceeding from Acts. Careful examination of the text by Lake (1933) reveals that in most cases these epithets could have been given to pious Jews and proselytes, and the contexts do not warrant their wholesale understanding in a peculiar meaning of "pious Gentiles."[7] Moreover, if the words are technical terms, Wilcox (1981) asks, why does Luke change so abruptly from *sebomenos* to *phoboumenos*? And why are the Apostolic Fathers conspicuously silent about the identification of "god-fearers" as sympathizers?

Most noteworthy is the phrase τῶν σεβομένων προσηλύτων (*Acta* 13.43), which presents a *crux interpretum* for the advocates of the strictly technical understanding of the word *sebomenoi* as designating non-proselytes,[8] since proselytes are plainly called here *sebomenoi*. To be sure, φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν, for Peter (and presumably also for Luke) could be of whatever origin, not only a born Gentile, but also a Jew. Peter said (*Acta* 10.35):

> ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ ἔθνει ὁ φοβούμενος αὐτὸν καὶ ἐργαζόμενος δικαιοσύνην δεκτὸς αὐτῷ ἐστίν
>
> . . . but in every nation he who fears him (the Lord) and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Douay Bible translation)

Paul addressed his public in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia as "men of Israel and those who fear God" (ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλεῖται καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, *Acta* 13.16), and also as "men and brethren, sons of the race of Abraham, and those among you who fear God" (ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, υἱοὶ γένους Ἀβραάμ, οἱ ἐν ὑμῖν φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, *Acta* 13.26). The grammar of the first phrase allows its understanding as "Israelites and non-Israelites who fear god," but both adjectives, "Israelites" and "those who fear God," might equally be applied to the same persons (Lake 1933: 86).[9] The second passage seems to mean that "those who fear God" are among the sons of Abraham, that is, they are born Jews. Nevertheless, the alternative understanding, that "god-fearers" are contrasted with "sons of Abraham" is also possible.

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[7] For a different analysis of the same passages see: Romaniuk 1964.

[8] It has been supposed that in this passage Luke's word usage is imprecise (Romaniuk 1964: 81; Lifshitz 1971: 80). This phrase was also censured as an interpolation (Stern 1974–84: 2, 105), but as Lake observed (1933: 88), "in reality the difficulty is entirely due to following a fixed idea rather than the meaning of the Greek, which is 'many of the Jews and the proselytes who were worshipping'" (πολλοὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ τῶν σεβομένων προσηλύτων). See also Siegert 1973: 139.

[9] For a different opinion see Romaniuk 1964: 72; Lifshitz 1971: 80; Siegert 1973: 129–130.

The paradigm of a "god-fearer" is the pious centurion Cornelius:

> ἀνὴρ δέ τις ἐν Καισαρείᾳ ὀνόματι Κορνήλιος, ἑκατοντάρχης ἐκ σπείρας τῆς καλουμένης Ἰταλικῆς, εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν σὺν παντὶ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ.
>
> Now there was in Caesarea a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the cohort called Italian; he was devout and God-fearing, as was his household. . . . (*Acta* 10.1–2; Douay Bible translation)

The same Cornelius is also called (*Acta* 10.22) "a just and god-fearing man" (ἀνὴρ δίκαιος καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν). Was Cornelius a "god-fearer" in the technical sense or merely a pious man who worshipped the true god? The text allows both options (Lake 1933: 86; cf. Finn 1985: 80).

In three instances the participle σεβόμενος may mean either "god-fearer" or plainly "a person attending the service, worshipping" (Lake 1933: 87). The phrase πολλοὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ τῶν σεβομένων προσηλύτων (*Acta* 13.43), mentioned above, means "many of the Jews and of the proselytes who were worshipping" (Lake 1933: 88). In the scene in Philippi, Paul addresses women who gathered at a place of prayer, among them a woman named Lydia, σεβομένη τὸν θεόν (*Acta* 16.4). She is not necessarily a "god-fearer," but was perhaps just worshipping the god when Paul began to speak. Τῶν σεβομένων Ελλήνων πλῆθος πολύ in the synagogue of Thessalonica (*Acta* 17.4) can also be "a large number of worshipping Greeks."

Only in two passages does the word *sebomenos* seem to mean a "sympathizer" (Lake 1933: 87). In the synagogue at Athens Paul had discussions with Jews and worshippers, διέλεγετο μὲν οὖν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ τοῖς σεβομένοις (*Acta* 17.17); the opposition between the two categories is likely to imply that σεβομένοις means non-Jewish worshippers. In another passage (*Acta* 18.7), a man living near the synagogue in Corinth is introduced as τινὸς ὀνόματι Τιτίου Ἰούστου σεβομένου τὸν θεόν. The phrase *sebomenos ton theon* in all probability characterized Justus as a Jewish sympathizer and therefore acquired in this instance a technical sense of "neither pagan nor Jew worshipping the Lord."

Thus, the phrases *sebomenos (phoboumenos) ton theon* in Acts, and the word *theosebes* in John, may refer to Jews, proselytes, Jewish sympathizers or pious people in general, disregarding their ethnic origin.

Lake's conclusions, that these phrases were not technical terms describing a limited class, but common words, and that their precise meaning ensued from the context, are unavoidable.[10]

It has been further argued that the historical value of Acts, and the credibility of Luke as a historian are dubious (Kraabel 1981: 118; cf. Finn 1985: 80). Acts was indeed composed for the purposes of theology, rather than history (N. Peterson 1978: 81–92; Maddox 1982; MacLennan and Kraabel 1986: 51–53), and therefore is to be treated with extreme caution, especially when Luke's statements cannot be supported by independent sources (Kraabel 1981: 118). Since the stories of "pious Gentiles" aim to an obvious propagandistic purpose, i.e., to demonstrate that the Christian mission to the Gentiles was preceded by a successful Jewish mission, these stories are likely to be an ingenious literary construction (Kraabel 1981: 120–121). Nevertheless, Luke would be unable to persuade his readers with a pure invention. The historicity of Luke's heroes is questionable, but the historical phenomenon which they represent must have been known to his public (Finn 1985: 80). Kraabel (1981) has disregarded this, concluding that as a result of Luke's lack of historical accuracy coupled with absence of archaeological evidence of the existence of "god-fearers," this category was destined to disappear.[11] Yet even if the argument returns to the initial point, that is, to the assertion of the historicity of Gentiles interested in synagogue teaching and practice, Lake's results remain valid: the usage of Acts shows that the words *sebomenos* or *phoboumenos* could be applied not only to "pious Gentiles," but to Jews and full proselytes as well.

In the Septuagint, the phrase φοβούμενος (σεβόμενος) τὸν κύριον (τὸν θεόν) is the usual rendering of the יראי יהוה, a common description of good Israelites (Lake 1933: 85; Feldman 1950: 202; Romaniuk 1964: 67–69; cf. Overman 1992: 148–149). However, in the Talmud, completed much later, the phrase יראי שמים (where שמים is a mere metonymy for יהוה) is used to describe Gentiles who accepted the truth of the Jewish religion but were not ready to join it by circumcision (Lake 1933: 82; Siegert 1973: 110–112; Stern 1974–84, 2: 104; Feldman 1986: 62; 1992: 392; 1993: 353–356; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 48; Goodman 1994: 131).[12] The Talmudic usage induced some authors to interpret יראי יהוה in Psalms and elsewhere in the Old Testament as "pious Gentiles" (Bernays 1885; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 49), inferring that this class existed not only in the Diaspora, but also in the Temple in Jerusalem (cf. Lake 1933: 85), which is scarcely possible. Moreover, the term does not occur in the earlier rabbinical tradition, in the Mishnah or the Tosefta (Siegert 1973: 110; Feldman 1986: 62), and as Wilcox (1981: 122; cf. Feldman 1993: 353) affirms, in the Babylonian Talmud the phrase in question seems to mean plainly "pious." The status of "Judaizers" has never been defined in the Rabbinic literature (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 48; Will and Orriuex 1992: 164). In any case, the technical meaning of the Hebrew יראי יהוה in the Old Testament cannot ensue from the later rabbinical literature. Hence the Greek translation of this expression, φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον, meant simply "god-fearing" and could be used by an observant Greek-speaking Jew.

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[10] This opinion was adopted by Feldman (1950), Leon (1960: 253), Robert (1964: 41–45), Wilcox (1981), and Trebilco (1991: 149). Siegert (1973: 131) regarded *phoboumenos* not as a technical term, but as a traditional indicator of the person's piety; he is less definite about *sebomenos*. Cohen (1987; 1989), who had been very close to Feldman's view on the subject in 1987, later, in 1989, was inclined to regard the phrases in question as conventional designations of pagan "venerators of god."

For an opposite opinion see: Romaniuk 1964: 72; Stern 1974–84, 2: 104; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 51; Mitchell 1995, 2: 32.

[11] Kraabel (1981: 121) admitted however that there were individual pagans interested in Judaism.

Metuentes, the supposed equivalent of *sebomenoi* in Latin, occurs in Latin literature only once (Feldman 1950: 201). In the fourteenth satire of Juvenal (96–99), a father reveres the Sabbath (*metuentem sabbata*), worships nothing but the clouds and the sky, and abstains from pork. His son is circumcised, learns the laws of Moses and despises Roman laws. However, this instance alone was sufficient for Bernays (1885), Lifshitz (1971: 83), and others to claim that *metuens*, together with φοβούμενος (σεβόμενος) τὸν θεόν and יראי יהוה, designates Gentiles attracted to Judaism.

One can find the words σεβόμενος and *metuens* in Greek and Roman literature, applied to worshippers of various pagan deities, for instance, τοῖς σεβομένοις τὸν Ἄνουβιν (Plut. *Mor.* 368F); εἰπέ μοι σεβόμενος Μίθρου φῶς μέγα (Plut. *Vita Alex.* 30); μόνον Ἄρη σεβόμενος (Ps.-Plut. *De fluviis* 14); Pyrrha *metuentior ulla deorum* (Ovid. *Metamorph.* 1.323).

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[12] For a survey of several relevant passages see Feldman 1986: 62; Goodman 1994: 131–132. For the list of references see Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 72, note 167.

Clement of Alexandria (*Protrept.* 5.56) reports Sauromatians as fire-worshippers (τὸ πῦρ σέβειν).

The word θεοσεβής also occurs in pagan contexts, meaning "pious" (cf. Robert 1964: 45; Kraabel 1981: 178). Herodotus applies this word to Croesus (1.86) and pagan Egyptians (2.37); Plato to pagan Greeks (*Crat.* 394D). Julian calls Alexander the Great ἀνὴρ θεοσεβής (*Ad Alexandrinos* 111, 433C).

The word *theosebeis* could be applied not only to Gentiles, but also to Jewish sympathizers, Jews, and Christians (cf. Siegert 1973: 161). Josephus indeed calls Poppaea θεοσεβής (*Ant.* 20.8.11; cf. Leon 1960: 28; Trebilco 1991: 347, note 11). However, in other cases, e.g., the story of Izates of Adiabene in the same book of the *Antiquities*, he does not use the word, although he definitely distinguishes between Izates' initial adherence to Judaism and his subsequent full conversion, which involved circumcision (*Ant.* 20.2.4, cf. Neusner 1964; Schiffman 1982; Cohen 1987: 420; Will and Orrieux 1992: 193–197). Hence, the occurrence of the word *theosebes* as a designation of the sympathy to the Jews on the part of Nero's prodigal wife cannot prove Josephus' awareness of its technical meaning.

In other instances, Josephus applies the word *theosebes* to Jews (Trebilco 1991: 147): Mattathias' last will was that his sons join all those δικαίους καὶ θεοσεβεῖς to the cause of the Maccabees (*Ant.* 12.6.3). In the pseudo-epigraphic work *Joseph and Asenath* (first or second century AD)[13] the word *theosebes* refers to full-fledged Jews: Levi, Benjamin, and Joseph (Siegert 1973: 113; Feldman 1986: 59; 1992: 390). Pagan authors also applied this word to Jews: Strabo 16.2.37 describes successors of Moses as θεοσεβεῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς—"truly pious."[14]

In the fifth century AD, Cyril of Alexandria (*De adoratione* 3) reports the existence of men who called themselves *theosebeis*, whose way of worship was neither purely Jewish nor Greek, as though undecided, εἰς ἄμφω (cf. Finn 1985: 84; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 63). Yet another prominent Christian, Eusebius, cites Melito, bishop of Sardis, referring the epithet *theosebeis* to Christians in general (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 4.26.5, 7; cf. MacLennan and Kraabel 1986: 51).

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[13] For the date and a survey of the research of this novel see Burchard 1987.

[14] Feldman (1993: 348) suggests that at least once the word θεοσεβεῖς appears to be applied to Jewish sympathizers: by Julian (*Ad Theodorum* 89A, 453C), who qualifies as partly god-fearing (ἐν μέρει θεοσεβεῖς) those revering the god who is the most powerful and the most good. But if "god-fearers" had been partly Jews, partly Gentiles, the phrase would be a pleonasm: "partly partly Jews." The passage combines laudation of Jewish piety and criticism of Jewish exclusive devotion to one god, which makes them neglect other gods. The phrase deals only with full-fledged Jews. The words ἐν μέρει express therefore Julian's attitude to Jews as partly pious in pagan terms: duly worshipping their own god, they lack reverence to other deities. Thus, θεοσεβεῖς in Julian's letter cannot be a technical term, it means only "pious." Stern's (1974–84, 2: No. 483) translation is: ". . . these Jews are in part god-fearing, seeing that they revere a god. . . ."

In the preserved works of Philo and Josephus, Jewish sympathizers are never called *sebomenoi* or *phoboumenoi.* Philo calls them *proselytoi* or ὁσίων ἀνθρώπων, "pious men" (*De spec. leg.* 2.12.42). The former usage is consistent with the meaning of the word *proselytoi* in the Septuagint, where it constantly refers to resident aliens sympathetic to Jewish worship, but not converts to Judaism (Overman 1992: 147).

In the *Embassy to Gaius* (33) Philo relates a whole spiritual biography of Petronius, the governor of Syria, and states that Petronius was disposed towards the Jewish religion, but does not use any special labels. Josephus uses the word "Judaizers," ἰουδαΐζοντες, to describe adherents as contrasted to complete proselytes (*De bell. Jud.* 2.17.10; 2.18.2; cf. Cohen 1987: 416–418). He also describes sympathizers as "those who revere our customs," οἱ τὰ ἡμέτερα τιμῶντες ἔθη (*Ant.* 3.8.9), and defines their intentions as "to praise the ancestral customs of the Jews," ζηλοῦν τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων (*Ant.* 20.2.5). In *Against Apion* (2.10; 2.39), mentioning a number of Gentiles who have adopted Jewish practices, he nevertheless does not make use of the expression φοβούμενος (σεβόμενος) τὸν θεόν (Cohen 1987: 425–426). In the *Jewish Antiquities* (14.7.2), the phrase σεβομένων τὸν θεόν is applied to Jews (Lake 1933: 85).[15] This implies that neither Philo

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[15] The text:

> Θαυμάσῃ δὲ μηδείς, εἰ τοσοῦτος ἦν πλοῦτος ἐν τῷ ἡμετέρῳ ἱερῷ πάντων τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην Ἰουδαίων καὶ σεβομένων τὸν θεόν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ τῆς Εὐρώπης εἰς αὐτὸ συμφερόντων ἐκ πολλῶν πάνυ χρόνων.
>
> Nobody will be surprised at the wealth in our temple, since all the Jews worshipping God throughout the world, both in Asia and in Europe, contribute there from the most ancient time.

Bernays (1885) and Schürer (1909: 174) maintain that Josephus meant "Jews and god-fearers" from all over the world. Yet the grammatical structure of this passage is unequivocal: καί connects not σεβομένων τὸν θεόν to Ἰουδαίων, but both to κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην (Lake 1933: 85). Bernays' translation would require τῶν before σεβομένων. Feldman (1956) first agreed with Lake, but later (1986: note 32; 1993: 350) changed his opinion, convinced by Marcus (1952), that although the rules of grammar demand τῶν σεβομένων, "the reference is to the sympathizers, since it is hard to understand why Josephus would mention Jews throughout the habitable world and then refer to them as 'even' (which would be required by the translation) coming from Asia and Europe (omitting Africa, incidentally)." But according to this very logic, what was the particular reason that induced Josephus to settle nor Josephus uses the words *sebomenos* or *phoboumenos* in a defined special sense (Feldman 1993: 348–352).

Technical terms for the designation of pagans attracted to Judaism were unknown to Greeks and Romans. The most common description for people adhering to Jewish practices was ἰουδαΐζειν (Siegert 1973: 161), applied by Plutarch (*Cic.* 7.6). Tacitus describes people adopting Jewish customs as *transgressi in morem eorum* (*Hist.* 5.5). Suetonius speaks of those who "live as Jews without acknowledging it" (*qui improfessi Iudaicam vivebant vitam, Domit.* 12.2; cf. Feldman 1986: 61; 1993: 347). Dio Cassius (*Hist. Rom.* 67.14; cf. Feldman 1992: 379; Cohen 1987: 429) says that Domitian's cousin and wife were charged with atheism and with having "drifted (ἐξοκέλλοντες)[16] into the Jewish practices." Epictetus (*Diss.* 2.9.19–20; cf. Siegert 1973: 161; Feldman 1989: 275; 1993: 346), observed, apparently meaning Jewish sympathizers:

> ὅταν τινὰ ἐπαμφοτερίζοντα ἴδωμεν, εἰώθαμεν λέγειν "οὐκ ἔστιν Ἰουδαῖος ἀλλ' ὑποκρίνεται."
>
> Whenever we see a man who behaves in an indecisive manner,[17] we usually say: "He is not a Jew, but only plays a role."

Commodianus, a third-century Christian poet, who wrote specifically about people "who are one foot in pagan temples and another in the synagogue" (Tannenbaum 1986: 57), did not use the word *metuens.* Instead, one of his poems (*Instruct.* 1.37) is addressed to *qui Iudaeidiant fanatici,* Judaizing pagans[18] (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 62–63). Roman lawyers were unfamiliar with the term: it is absent from

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the *sebomenoi* in Asia and Europe, that is, in two-thirds of the *oikoumene,* leaving Africa apart? Didn't he rather flank the "god-fearing Jews" by two symmetric indications of their distribution, in a somewhat awkward effort to be eloquent, but nevertheless observing the rules of Greek grammar?

See also the analysis of this passage by Siegert (1973: 127), who adopts Bernays' version, although not without hesitation. Marcus' opinion is accepted also by Bellen (1965/66: 173), Lifshitz (1971: 78), Stern (1974–84, 2: 105), Millar (1986: 162), and Trebilco (1991: 149).

[16] The phrase ἐξοκέλλειν τινὰ εἰς ἕτερον ἦθος has been used as early as in Menandros' comedies, meaning "to change somebody's habits;" for this and other instances see *LSJ* s.v. ἐξοκέλλω.

Some scholars think that Cassius Dio meant in this case Christianity and not Judaism; others take these words at their face value. For the discussion see Stern 1974–84, 2: 381, with references.

[17] Translation of ἐπαμφοτερίζειν suggested by Reynolds and Tannenbaum (1987: 62), rather than "to halt between two faiths" (Feldman 1986: 60; Stern 1974–84, 1: No. 254).

[18] As Reynolds and Tannenbaum (1987: 62) comment on this title, *di* may be a provincial varsion for *-z-*, and *fanatici* is popular Latin for *fanorum cultores.*

Roman law (Juster 1914, 1: 254). Apostolic fathers are conspicuously silent about the identification of Jewish sympathizers as "godfearers" (Feldman 1993: 342).

2.2.1.2 *Epigraphic Data*

In both Greek and Latin inscriptions the words σεβόμενος and *metuens* were frequently used to designate Jews. The famous inscription in the Miletus theater clearly refers to Jews as *theosebeis*: Τόπος Εἰουδέων τῶν καὶ θεοσεβίον (*SEG* 4.441; *CIJ* 748). In the opinion of the first publisher, Diessmann (1923: 391), as well as of Feldman (1950: 204; 1986: 59), Robert (1964: 41), and Kraabel (1979: 490), θεοσεβίον is applied to Jews. The advocates of the technical meaning of the word are therefore forced to suggest a modification of the text, as is done in other instances, the treatment of τῶν σεβομένων προσηλύτων in Acts serving an example. Thus, Schürer (1909: 174) conjectures καὶ τῶν instead of τῶν καί, and this conjecture is viewed favorably by Romaniuk (1964: 81), Bellen (1965/6), Lifshitz (1969), and Trebilco (1991: 161). Bellen and Lifshitz suggest as a parallel a Panticapaeum manumission (*CIRB* 71, below, 2.2.3.1), again not in the form preserved on the stone, but with an arbitrary correction. Reynolds and Tannenbaum (1987: 54) observe that if this change of the text is accepted and the Miletus inscription is left in its original form, the two inscriptions cancel each other; to make them agree, two modifications are demanded. Can an argument be regarded as legitimate when it is based on two inscriptions, each of them modified, while the texts on the stones make sense without conjectures? If one does not read into the word *theosebes* the strict technical meaning, there is no reason to "correct" the texts.

A careful check of *CIJ* led Feldman (1950: 203–205) to conclude that *theosebeis* and *metuentes* in the inscriptions from Italy apply to Jews and proselytes, and there are no special reasons to believe that these words meant in most cases[19] anything but "pious"[20] (cf. Leon 1960:

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[19] The transliterations of θεοσεβής into Latin on the tombstones of *Eparchia theosebes* (*CIJ* I 228), from a Roman Jewish catacomb, and of *Marchus teuseves (sic)*, from a Jewish cemetery in Venosa (Apulia; Lifshitz 1962: 368), make Feldman believe that this word was acquiring a technical meaning (1950: 204; 1993: 359). However, Siegert (1973: 157) cites other Italian inscriptions with Greek words spelled in Latin characters, for instance, a doubtless Jewish epitaph (*CIJ* I 482), where the deceased is praised as *decea, osia, filentolia*. The fact of transliteration therefore loses its value as an argument in favor of the strictly technical meaning of *theosebes* in Italy.

[20] Moreover, an inscription (*CIJ* 202) on a tombstone found in a Jewish ceme-

253; Siegert 1973: 156–159; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 52–53). In the synagogue inscriptions from the Agaean islands and Asia Minor, which mention *theosebeis*,[21] "there is nothing to prevent the *theosebeis* from being Jews, born and bred, who regard themselves, or are regarded by the community, as distinguished for piety" (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 54; cf. Robert 1964: 44–45; Wilcox 1981: 115; Kraabel 1981: 116). This situation looks quite natural, since, as Feldman (1950: 203) puts it, "the sine qua non for Judaism is the fear of Lord; but it is the sine qua non for born Jews as well as for newcomers to the faith."

Moreover, the evidence from six excavated synagogues of the Roman Diaspora (in Dura Europos, Sardis, Priene, Ostia, Stobi, and on Delos), analyzed by Kraabel (1976; 1979; 1981; MacLennan and Kraabel 1986), has revealed no traces of Gentile penumbra around the Diaspora synagogue communities. Neither the inscriptions nor the symbolism used in these buildings suggest the presence of sympathizers attracted by Jewish communities.[22]

The verb σέβομαι was also applied to Christians. Maclennan and Kraabel (1986: 52) cite a graffito with an anti-Christian caricature from Rome, showing a man kneeling before a donkey-headed[23] crucified figure. The legend reads: ΑΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΣΕΒΕΤΕ ΘΕΟΝ. This "Alexamenos who worships God" was surely Christian.

Epigraphic evidence testifies that pagans could be called σεβόμενοι and *metuentes*: for example, Roman worshippers of Jupiter (*CIL* VI. 390) or other pagans (*CIL* VI. 29759, 29760, 29763; VIII. 4321; Lake 1933: 90; Siegert 1973: 152) and Greek dedicants to Apollo

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tery contains the words προσή[λυτος] . . . [θ]εοσεβι; if Frey's restoration [θ]εοσεβή<ς> is correct, this epitaph belongs either to two persons, a proselyte and a "god-fearer," or to a "god-fearing proselyte" (Feldman 1950: 204), which is reminiscent of τῶν σεβομένων προσηλύτων in Acts (13.43).

There is a further indication of the Jewish origin of these "god-fearers": they were buried in Jewish cemeteries, hence are unlikely to be non-Jews. The reverse logic, namely, that tombstones of *theosebeis* found in Jewish catacombs and cemeteries prove that pagan sympathizers could be buried with Jews (Kant 1987: 688; Feldman 1993: 572, note 52), is based on the a priori erroneous assumption that all *theosebeis* are Gentile "semi-proselytes."

[21] Listed in Kant 1987: 389. See also Robert 1964: 39–45; Lifshitz 1967: Nos. 17; 18; 30.

[22] Using literary evidence, Goodman (1989; 1992; 1994) also argues against the belief that before late second–third centuries AD Jews had encouraged Gentiles to convert. For an opposite view see Feldman 1993: 288–341.

[23] For the fable of ass-worship by Jews and Christians see Stern 1974–84, 1: 97, with references.

(*Syll.*^{3} 557, cf. Feldman 1950: 204). Devoteés of Artemis *Leucophryene*[24] were especially fond of using the phrase σεβόμενοι Ἄρτεμιν Λευκοφρυάναν: *IMagnesia* 6, 8, 10, 14, 15, 22, 25, 30, 32; 44, 47, 54, 68 *IG* XII *Suppl.* 138; *IG* IX. 2.582. The adverb θεοσεβῶς is used in a second-century AD pagan inscription from Boeotia: τὴν . . . ὄρχησιν θεοσεβῶς ἐπετέλεσεν (*IG* VII 2712, *cf.* Siegert 1973: 155). An Istrian decree (*Syll.*^{3} 708; cf. Robert 1964: 44; Siegert 1973: 155) says: . . . προαγόμενος εἰς τὸ θεοσεβεῖν ὡς ἔπρεπεν αὐτῷ πρῶτον μὲν ἐτείμησεν τοὺς θεούς. Very significant is a Delian decree (*IG* XI. 4.691), in honor of a Chian living on Delos, Eutychos son of Philotes, which describes his virtues: τούς τε θεοὺς σεβόμενος κα[ὶ εὔνους ὢν τῶι] ἱερῶι καὶ Δηλίοις . . .: the abstract "fearing the gods" is certainly only one step away from "fearing the god."

A recent chance discovery in Aphrodisias impacted considerably on the discussion of the role and nature of the "god-fearers." A Greek inscription (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 5–7), dating back to the early third century AD (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 21; Williams 1992: 297) lists the donors to πάτελλα, presumably a soup-kitchen (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 26–28; cf. Feldman 1989: 287).[25] About a hundred and thirty names of donors are divided into two groups. The first group comprises mainly Jewish names; more than sixty persons are separated into the second group, of θεοσεβῖς, the majority bearing common Gentile names. These "god-fearers" are considered Gentiles attracted to the synagogue, who constituted a distinct category (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 56–59).

The publication of the Aphrodisias inscription certainly sheds new light on the much-discussed problem of the "god-fearers."[26] Yet still in 1981, before the comprehensive publication of the monument, Kraabel had already predicted that new evidence required to prove that "god-fearers" constituted a considerable social category "would have to be substantial; one clear inscription using the term *phoboumenos* or *sebomenos* precisely as in Acts . . . might prove God-fearers for that particular synagogue community" (1981: 121). Commenting on the prepublication of the Aphrodisias inscription, MacLennan and Kraabel

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[24] For her cult see: Laumonier 1958: 526; Helck 1971: 247.

[25] For a totally different interpretation see Williams 1992.

[26] For evaluations of its impact see: Feldman 1989; Trebilco 1991: 152–155; Goodman 1994: 117; Mitchell 1995, 2: 32. For a critical review of the editors' interpretation of the Aphrodisias inscription see Murphy-O'Connor 1992.

(1986: 51) evaluate it as "exceedingly important," but nevertheless describing the connection between only one Jewish community and some pious Gentiles (cf. Trebilco 1991: 154). Goodman (1994: 47) stresses that the inscription may attest to the situation in the time when it was written, i.e., not before the third century AD.

Furthermore, Murphy-O'Connor (1992) interprets the Aphrodisias stone as containing two inscriptions, in which the word *theosebes* was used in different senses. In one part, a list of members of a Jewish group which met for prayer and study, the word (occurring twice) means Gentiles who participate in the life of the synagogue. In the other part, fifty-four people who are called *theosebeis*, city councilors among them, are benefactors who contribute to a charity project initiated by Jews; the word "pious" applied to them "would be merely a gracious compliment to their moral character without implying that they belonged in any sense to the local synagogue" (Murphy-O'Connor 1992: 422). Thus, the Aphrodisias evidence emphasizes the ambiguity of the word *theosebes*, which was probably used in the specific and in the generic sense in the same inscription.

The point of the present discussion is affected by the Aphrodisias discovery even less than the thesis of Kraabel. The fact that in Aphrodisias Jewish sympathizers—or probably only some of them—were called *theosebeis* neither eliminates the fact that the word was applied to pagans, Christians, and born Jews in other contexts, nor proves that the word was used as a *terminus technicus* all over the Roman Empire. How many Aphrodisias-style inscriptions have to be discovered to demonstrate that the word *theosebes* was first and foremost a *terminus technicus*, and that its use in other meanings was rather an exception?

Moreover, the difference between the word used in the Aphrodisias inscription and the usage in Acts is noteworthy. In the former pious non-Jews are called *theosebeis*; the same word, applied to persons connected to Judaism, occurs in inscriptions from elsewhere. *Sebomenoi* or *phoboumenoi* never occur in the synagogue inscriptions (Kraabel 1981: 116). The asserted pious Gentiles of Acts were never described as *theosebeis*, but rather as *sebomenoi ton theon*.[27] Even if those *sebomenoi* had been Jewish sympathizers—and the contexts do not imply that—

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[27] Siegert (1973: 161) demonstrates that the phrases *sebomenoi ton theon, phoboumenoi ton theon, theosebeis*, and *metuentes* are not synonyms.

terminological discrepancy between literary and epigraphic evidence is apparent.[28]

Thus, each instance in which the phrases *metuens*, φοβούμενος (σεβόμενος) τὸν θεόν, and יראי יהוה occur must be examined separately in its own context. As Feldman (1950: 208) stated almost half a century ago, "Bernay's attempt . . . to bring order out of chaos in the matter of terminology, must . . . be abandoned. . . . The resulting chaos would seem to be preferable to an order that is not in accordance with the facts."

To return to the Bosporus: the fact that the members of some collegia in Tanais designated themselves as εἰσποιητοὶ ἀδελφοὶ σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὕψιστον does not warrant their identification as Jewish sympathizers, firstly, because *sebomenoi ton theon* is not a technical term for the designation of this group, and secondly, because the Tanais "brethren" worshipped not an abstract *theos*, but a god who had an epithet. To label members of the Bosporus associations as Judaizers, one has to combine a postulated understanding of the New Testament *sebomenoi* with a Septuagint rendering of the Old Testament metonymy for Yahweh. This combination could be grounded only if the word *sebomenoi* had occurred solely in Jewish contexts, and *Theos Hypsistos* had been uniquely the god of Judaism. This is definitely not the case.

2.2.2 *Theos Hypsistos*

Schürer and those who follow him put forward another argument: the anonymous god of the Bosporus was called *Theos Hypsistos*, while *(Theos) Hypsistos* was a common term in the Septuagint and in the writings of Hellenistic Judaism to denote the god of the Jews (cf. Simon 1972; 1976; Trebilco 1991: 129); hence, the Bosporan cult of the Most High God emerged under a direct Jewish influence. First of all, Bosporan inscriptions attest to seven designations of the anonymous deity. Their attribution to one and the same god demands substantiation, which has not yet been supplied. On the other hand, there are solid reasons to ascribe different epithets to different gods. However, the main argument against Schürer's hypothesis is the fact that the title *Hypsistos* was applied during the Imperial period to various gods, and therefore does not testify to a direct Jewish influence (Cook 1914–40, 2: 889; Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 64; Lifshitz 1964: 160; Trebilco 1991: 128). The lists of occurrences of this epithet in Schürer's own article (1897), and the catalogues of Cumont (1914), Cook (1914–40, 2: 876–890), and of Roberts, Skeat, and Nock (1936) demonstrate that many pagan anonymous gods were also called *Hypsistoi.* Trebilco (1991: 130, with references) further argues that Jewish writers, such as Josephus and Philo, were aware of this usage, and were clearly disinclined to apply it to the god of Judaism without qualification, in order to avoid misunderstanding.

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[28] For an opposing opinion see Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 56. This discrepancy cannot be removed by their suggestion that fashion simply changed after Luke (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 56).

Numerous occurrences of *Theos Hypsistos* in unequivocal pagan contexts prove that the epithet by itself is not sufficient to maintain that a cult is basically Jewish. The difficulties in the attribution of documents, *Hypsistos* inscriptions in particular, to a certain religious milieu have recently been demonstrated by Kraemer (1991) and Bij de Vaate and van Henten (1996), who advise extreme caution in identifying texts which lack clear cultic indications.

To be sure, several Bosporan inscriptions referring to an anonymous god are Jewish, or reveal Jewish influence. The question is whether the fact that in some Jewish manumissions from Gorgippia the god is called θεὸς ὕψιστος παντοκράτωρ εὐλογητός (*CIRB* 1123; 1125; 1126, below 2.2.3.1) warrants the inference that all the worshippers of *Theos Hypsistos* on the Bosporus were Jewish sympathizers. The purpose of the following is therefore not to produce a new survey of pagan *Hypsistos* cults, but rather to check the reasoning suggested by Schürer and his followers, and to note some points that have a bearing on further argumentation.

2.2.2.1 *Pagan Henotheism*

Zeus the sky-god was called in earlier poetry ὕψιστος, ὑπέρτατος, etc. (Cook 1914–40, 2: 975). Later this epithet ceased to be in literary use (Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 64), and the epigraphic monuments of the cult of Zeus or *Theos Hypsistos* belong mostly to common people (Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 64). Zeus was not only addressed as "the Most High": he appears as the personification of the supreme divine power, the manifestation of the principle of natural and social order. The germ of the conepts of Zeus's omnipotence and omniscience is already present in the Homeric epos (Kenney

1989: 273–275). The further development of these notions is reflected in later literature, especially in Aeschylus (*Suppl.* 524; Burkert 1985: 131; Kenney 1989: 276–280). Yet the propagation of the monotheistic idea in the ancient world is usually attributed to Judaism and Christianity.

Henotheism, both as an intellectual and as a cultic phenomenon, certainly has its pagan history.[29] The modern term "henotheism" derives from the acclamation εἶς ὁ θεός, "One is the god" (Versnel 1990: 35), which is documented by numerous inscriptions on stone and other media, papyri, etc. (E. Peterson 1926). As Versnel (1990: 35) observes, "the acclamation does not (necessarily) entail monotheistic notions ('there is no other god *except* this god').... It denotes a personal devotion to one god ('there is no other god *like* this god') without involving rejection or neglect of other gods."

Xenophanes of Colophon spoke of the one god already in the fifth century BC (*VS* 23; Burkert 1985: 308; Kenney 1989: 277). This pioneering way of thinking was furthered by Socrates' pupils (Xen. *Mem.* 1.4, 4.3; Cicero *De natura deorum* 1.32; *GGR* 2 569), Plato (*GGR* 2 570; Burkert 1985: 330; Kenney 1989: 280), Aristotle (*Met.* 12.7.20–25, 1072b; 12.5.15, 1074b; 12.0 10.35, 1076a; cf. Hengel 1974: 2.106), Stoics (Seneca *Nat. quest.* 2.45, *De prov.* 1.4; Servius *Ad Georgica* 1.5; Marc. Aurel. 7.9; cf. E. Peterson 1926: 256; Liebeschuetz 1979: 114–115), and Neo-Platonists (Plotin. 6.9.8; cf. Dodds 1968: 88–89; Kenney 1989: 285–288). Chapter six of the treatise *On the World*, ascribed to Aristotle, presents a most coherent exposition of this world conception (Nilsson 1963: 109).

Not only philosophers, but also adherents of some cults professed henotheistic ideas and beliefs. Versnel (1990: 96–205) demonstrates that Euripides' Dionysos in *Bacchae* "is the first Greek god to be portrayed with the full set of paraphernalia of the great gods of Hellenistic henotheism" (Versnel 1990: 37). Some Orphic hymns treated Zeus as the all-embracing universal god (*OF* 21a, 165). Since the Hellenistic period, Isis was extolled in her "aretalogies," or "praises," as an omnipotent goddess who had created the world, had defined its laws, and ruled it according to her will (Versnel 1990: 41–44).[30] Hermetism elevated Hermes *Trismegistos*, the cosmic High God, to a transcendent deity (Nilsson 1963: 103–106); the ruler of the word was invocated on magical amulets (Goodenough 1953–68, 2: 291–295).

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[29] For henotheism in pagan cults see Versnel 1990. For pagan philosophic henotheism see: *GGR* 2.569–578; Nilsson 1963; Hengel 1974, 1: 261, with further bibliography.

[30] As *kosmokrateira* and the guardian against the threats of Fate, Isis was succeeded by the Holy Virgin, who is described in Byzantine treaties in similar terms (Versnel 1990: 87).

Henotheism gradually became accepted in its popular forms, as Maximus of Tyre (*Diss.* 11.5), Celsus (Orig. *Contra Celsum* 5.41), Julian (*Or.* 4.141D, 181H), Varro (August. *Civ. Dei* 4.11), and Macrobius (*Saturn.* 1 passim) testify, to cite only a few examples. Although the popularity of this trend in the Late Antiquity was perhaps largely due to the influence of Judaism and Christianity (*GGR* 2: 569–578; Hengel 1974, 1: 261; Simon 1972, 1976), the phenomenon of exceptional devotion to one god had developed inside the pagan world, independently of Judaeo-Christian monotheism.

As to the divine anonymity, it may be observed that some Greek deities were anonymous because their names were ineffable, as for instance the Eumenides (Sophocl. *Oed. Col.* 45; cf. Bikerman 1937/38: 191). Gods remained anonymous if their names were still unknown (Gellius *Noct. Att.* 2.28; Her. 2.52; cf. Bikerman 1937/38: 191). Ascribing a Greek or Roman counterpart to foreign deities, which is so typical of Classical Antiquity (Bikerman 1937/38: 187–191) caused an inflation of the significance of the divine names. In the Orient the tendency to the god's anonymity was much more pronounced: the Syrian Baal is simply the Lord; Baalshamin, the Lord of the Sky; Baal Saphon, the Lord of the North; Melcart, the King of the City; and the Phoenician El and Elioun are the God and the Highest (du Mesnil du Buisson 1970: 30–35). Phrygian deities like Hosion and Dikaion, the Holy and the Just, are in fact almost anonymous (below, 2.2.2.2). Greeks and Romans were certainly aware of the Jewish aversion to pronouncing their god's name (Bikerman 1937/38: 191; Simon 1976: 49), and it may have activated the trend towards divine anonymity. This feature however was not a novelty introduced entirely by Jews.

However, the trend towards henotheism and the anonymity of the god brought in major changes that cannot be overestimated. Every pagan town "had more divine than human inhabitants," to use Bikerman's (1937/38: 187) paraphrase of Petronius; divine names and epithets were essential elements of gods' personalities, of primary importance in cult. To disregard the god's name and venerate a supreme cosmic deity, who was either anonymous or "many-named," meant in itself a profound re-orientation of religious outlook. Henotheism, which did not involve a total abandonment of the ancestral gods, was a comfortable compromise between traditional paganism and monotheism. Yet this development does not necessarily imply a Jewish influence; parallel use of the epithet "the Most High" by Jews and pagans, as Trebilco (1991: 131–132) argues, can be explained without proposing any relationship between Zeus and Yahweh.

The efforts of the pagan philosophers to make the polytheistic world picture come to terms with the belief in a universal all-mighty deity met with practical religious thinking in some major sanctuaries, for instance, in Didyma and Claros, where a new henotheistic theology developed in the first–third centuries AD (Mitchell 1995, 2: 43–45). Oracles issued in these popular cultic centers are collected in a work of a pagan Porphyry entitled *Philosophy to be Learned from the Oracles*, which survived as a part of the fifth-century AD Christian treatise *On True Belief* (Lane Fox 1987: 171–182; Mitchell 1995, 2: 43). The ideas of these oracles "are in no way out of place in the philosophy of the period, even if they lack an elaborate argumentation that might be found in a philosophical treatise" (Mitchell 1995, 2: 44). The concern about the true nature of gods was not restricted to the educated minority. Delegations from all over the eastern Mediterranean, which were sent to Claros (Lane Fox 1987: map on p. 174), inquired about theological issues, because of popular, and not only elitist, interest in the subject (Mitchell 1995, 2: 45). This common erudition in theology is reflected in dedications, for instance from Africa: *Iovi optimo maximo, deorum principi, gubernatori omnium rerum coeli terrarumque rectori* (to Jupiter the Best and the Greatest, the Godhead, the governor of everything, the ruler of the sky and the earth, *ILS* 2.4082); or from Dacia: *Iovi summo exsuperantissimo divinarum humanarumque rerum rectori* . . . (to Jupiter the Highest the Most Exalted, the ruler of divine and human affairs . . ., *CIL* III. 1090; Sanie 1977: 142).[31]

It has already been observed that in the Imperial epoch Zeus, or Jupiter, had been deprived of almost all his mythological and cultic associations These names turned into labels for rather abstract notions of any supreme divine being (Hengel 1974, 1: 256–267; Goodenough 1953–1968: 2.252, 291). The process of assimilation of local higher deities, and even the degeneration of their names to the status of an epithet of a universal god, Zeus or Jupiter, was most pronounced in the Near East and Asia Minor (Seyrig 1962: 202; Sourdel 1952:

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[31] For pagan henotheism in Late Antiquity see also Liebeschuetz 1979: 278–287; MacMullen 1981: 82–94; 1990: 134–135.

19; Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 61). Gradually, the distinction between *theos* and Zeus became vague, if not entirely obliterated (cf. Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 59).

2.2.2.2 *Epigraphic Evidence on the Hypsistos Cults*

In some places *Theos Hypsistos* and Zeus *Hypsistos* enjoyed the same cult, and seem to be indistinguishable. The most famous example is the Athenian cult of a healing deity, to whom reliefs featuring the cured parts of the body were offered. These dedications were addressed to *Theos Hypsistos*, to *Zeus Hypsistos*, or to just *Hypsistos* (*IG* II^2 4737, 4738, 4782–4785, 4798–4809, 4811, 4843, 9311; *SEG* 14.139; 16.185; 19.225; 226; 28.231; cf. Cook 1914–40, 2: 877; *GGR* 2: 332).[32] Of four altars from Seleucia on the Calycadnus in Cilicia, probably originating from the same shrine, three belonged to *Theos Hypsistos*, and one to Zeus *Hypsistos* (*MAMA* 3.1–4; cf. Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 56). In Thrace and Dacia the phrases *Theos Hypsistos* and Zeus *Hypsistos* were in many cases interchangeable (below, 2.3.3).

Sometimes the two cults differ: on Delos, where *Theos Hypsistos* was venerated in a *proseuche* and was mentioned in apparently Jewish prayers for vengeance (*CIJ* 725, 727, 728, 729; Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 57–58), a mountain-cult of Zeus *Hypsistos* existed (Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 61). The Macedonian cult of Zeus *Hypsistos* or *Hyperberetaios* was indeed prominent. It is attested not only in Macedonia proper (Cormack 1974; Tačeva-Hitova 1978a: 61–70), but also in the Macedonian colonies in Asia Minor (Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 61). *Theos Hypsistos megistos soter*, who was offered a dedication in Thessalonica (*IG* X. 2.67; Tačeva-Hitova 1978a: No. 5), appears as a pagan deity, although perhaps foreign in the country where the epithet "most high" belonged to local Zeus. A *hierodoule* of the Mother of Gods, who erected an altar κατ' ἐπιταγὴν Θεοῦ Ὑψίστου in Macedonia (*SEG* 38.583) was evidently pagan. By contrast, in a dedication from Thessalonica θεῷ ὑψίστῳ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν ΙΟΥΕΣ (*IG* X. 2.58), the letters ΙΟΥΕΣ may be an attempt to transliterate the name of Yahweh (Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 67; Colpe 1967: 1292).

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[32] Tablets featuring female breasts, eyes, etc., were also offered to *Theos Hypsistos* on Cyprus (Cook 1914–40, 2: 879).

In Palmyra, where a Jewish community was present (Février 1931: 123), over two hundred fire-altars were dedicated to a god, designated in bilingual inscriptions as בריך שׁמא לעלמא, "he whose name is blessed forever," sometimes also טבא ורחמנא, "good and compassionate," in Palmyrene Aramaic; Ζεὺς Ὕψιστος, and usually ἐπήκοος, "he who hears prayer," in Greek. A number of features, shared by the anonymous god with Baalshamin, warrant the interpretation of the *Hypsistos* cult as a continuation of the cult of Baalshamin (Février 1931: 126; Starcky 1952: 99; Colart and Vicari 1969: 212; Drijvers 1976: 15). However, the two cults were not congruent: the unusual ex-votos, altars with incense-burners, were found far away from the Baalshamin temple, which was never entered by the anonymous god (Drijvers 1976: 15). *Hypsistos* did not replace Baalshamin in the Palmyrene pantheon, rather both coexisted, the new cult being more spiritualized and more appealing to the individual (Ustinova and Naveh 1993: 93–94).

As to the absolutely anonymous *Theos* (in contrast to Zeus) *Hypsistos*, in one and the same area different deities could be called "the highest." The situation in Asia Minor, with its famous prosperous Jewish communities,[33] is really astounding, as Kraabel (1969), Trebilco (1991: 127–144), and Mitchell (1995, 2: 43–51) have demonstrated. Western Asia Minor has produced numerous *Hypsistos* inscriptions, but unequivocally Jewish inscriptions mentioning *Theos Hypsistos* are rare.

One of them originates from Acmonia in Phrygia (*CIJ* 769). Its fragmentary text contains a reference to the Old Testament and calls upon ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὕψιστος to protect the grave (cf. Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 67; Kraabel 1969: 88; Trebilco 1991: 135). In Kraabel's (1969: 92) opinion, "the phrasing is deliberate, surely self-conscious; the dedicant seems to be asserting that in face of all the deities given the title ὕψιστος, his god, the God of the Jews, is in fact *the highest god*." Another document originates from Galatia (*CIJ* 797a; cf. Mitchell 1995, 2: 36, 46). This dedication to the "Great Highest and Celestial god and his holy angels" (τῷ μεγάλῳ Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπουρανίῳ καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῦ ἀνγέλοις—*sic*) might be interpreted as pagan, if it were not for its use of the word *proseuche*, which enhances the plausibility of its being either Jewish or Judaizing (Mitchell 1995, 2: 46).

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[33] For the major Jewish communities in this area, see Kraabel 1969: 85, Mitchell 1995, 2: 31–37, and Trebilco 1991.

Although rarely, Christians also referred the title *Theos Hypsistos* to their god (Bij de Vaate and van Henten 1996: 24). For instance, in the Pontus, a stele decorated with crosses bears an inscription addressed to *Hypsistos* (*SEG* 35.1347). This document probably suggests the interpretation for several inscriptions that "hover between paganism and Christianity" (Mitchell 1995, 2: 50).

Other *Hypsistos* inscriptions from Asia Minor are either dubious or emphatically pagan. Dubious are inscriptions which lack clear indications of religious milieu and are therefore classified in accordance with indirect evidence. *Hypsistos* inscriptions which were discovered next to pagan temples, or among dedications to a pagan god, are usually regarded as pagan, as for instance those from Aezani (Cook 1914–40, 2: 882, 964–968; Drew Bear and Naour 1990: 2039) or dedications to *Theos Hypsistos* found in Nacoleia (*MAMA* 5.186, 211, 212), where Zeus *Brennios* and Zeus *Bronton* were very popular (*MAMA* 5: XV, XXXVIII; Cook 1914–40.2: 833; Kraabel 1969: 88–89; Drew Bear and Naour 1990: 2034; Mitchell 1995, 2: 49). A dedication θεῷ Ὑψίστῳ καὶ Ὁσίῳ καὶ Δίι (*SEG* 25.1182) originates from the same area. Of two very similar altars from Pergamon, one was dedicated Ἡλίῳ θεῷ ὑψίστῳ, and the other θεῷ ὑψίστῳ (Cook 1914–40, 2: 882; Kraabel 1969: 89). In Seleucia on Calycadnos out of four altars discovered in the same sanctuary, three were offered to *Theos Hypsistos* (*MAMA* 3.1–3) and one to Zeus *Hypsistos* (*MAMA* 3.4).

The attribution of a *Hypsistos* inscription to a certain religious milieu on the grounds that the same site has produced Jewish or pagan monuments is certainly problematic (Mitchell 1995, 2: 49). A vow to *Theos Hypsistos* (*SEG* 26.1355), which was found at the site where the mentioned Jewish epitaph had been discovered, was interpreted as Jewish or Judaizing, while an almost identical dedication (*SEG* 26.1356), originating from another village in the territory of Acmonia, was identified as pagan (cf. Mitchell 1995, 2: 49). Mitchell (1995, 2: 49) reviewes additional instances of identically worded inscriptions which were classified differently because of similar considerations.

An image of an eagle,[34] an ex-voto to *Theos Hypsistos* from Thyateira (Cook 1914–40, 2: 881), could be offered to a celestial pagan god, as well as to the god of the Jews (Kraabel 1969: 89). The same is true for a dedication of a marble column from the vicinity of Magnesia ad Sipylum (*IGR* 4.1176), which was set up by a couple in honor of *Theos Hypsistos*; later their sons topped the column with a lamp and added a dedication to *Hypsistos*, without the word *theos* (Kraabel 1969: 90): lamps were common both in Jewish and pagan cultic use.

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[34] For eagles decorating Jewish monuments, see above, 2.1.1.1.

Two inscriptions from Miletus, set up by guilds of gardeners and of spikers of shellfish, honor a priest of "the most holy and most high savior god," (τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου θεοῦ ὑψίστου σωτῆρος, *OGIS* 755, 756). To judge by the cumulative effect of the epithet, these inscriptions may reveal Jewish influence (Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 67). However, this exalted divinity fits perfectly well the theology of a remote and abstract deity developed in Didyma and Claros (Mitchell 1995, 2: 49, cf. 43–44). In addition, shellfish is a food prohibited by Jewish dietary laws (Kraabel 1969: 89). Simon (1972: 284) supposed that the god of these inscriptions was Jesus.

At Sibidunda in Pisidia, an altar (*SEG* 19.852; Mitchell 1995, 2: fig. 16) was dedicated θεῷ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἁγαίᾳ καταφυγῇ, the latter interpreted as the Roman *Sancta Tutela* by Robert (*Bull.* 74.1961, No. 750; Lifshitz 1964: 161) and as "Sacred Refuge," a concept derived from the Old Testament, by Mitchell (1995, 2: 49). In compliance with these interpretations, Robert regards this dedication as pagan, while in Mitchell's opinion it is Jewish. The latter opinion is shared by Trebilco (1991: 136). A pagan dedication to *Theos Hypsistos* was however set up in nearby Andeda by a priest of Men *Ouranios* (*SEG* 19.874; cf. Mitchell 1995, 2: 49).

Various doubtlessly pagan gods were conceived as "the highest" in Asia Minor. In the Pisidian Termessos, a worshipper of *Theos Hypsistos epekoos* set up a dedication "with the god's foot on it" (σὺν τῷ ἔποντι ἴχνει θεοῦ), and the stone was actually topped with a statue of a foot (*TAM* 3.1.32; cf. Cook 1914–40, 2: 879; Mitchell 1995, 2: 50).[35] In Lydia not only *Theos Hypsistos* was worshipped (*TAM* 5.1.52, 186, 220, 266, 461a; 5.2.897–900, 1258, 1400; Mitchell 1995, 2: 49), but also *Thea Hypsiste*, clearly some form of the Great Goddess

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[35] In the temple at Ain Dara (north-western Syria, early first millennium BC) large footprints were cut in the thresholds of the cella and the anticella. It is suggested that these footprints symbolized divine presence (Abou Assaf *sine anno*: 10, fig. 17). The temple was presumably dedicated to Ishtar and her consort, perhaps a mountain god (Abou Assaf *sine anno*: 15). The image of the footprint seems to have remained significant at Ain Dara as late as the first centuries AD: a Roman *terra sigillata* bowl features a relief of a footprint, with the word χάρις incised upon it (Abou Assaf *sine anno* fig. 7).

I owe this reference to the kindness of Avigdor Hurowitz and Oded Tammuz.

(*TAM* 5.1.359; Cook 1914–40, 2: 881; Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 61; Robert 1958: 119). A Lydian dedication dated to 181/2 AD (Robert 1958: 112–120) reads:

> θεῷ ὑψίστῳ καὶ μεγ[ά]λῳ θείῳ ἐπιφανεῖ[36] Δημὼ θυγάτηρ Τυράννου θεὰν Λαρμηνὴν ἀνέστησεν ἔτους σνζʹ.
>
> To the Most High god and the Great appearing divinity, Demo daughter of Tyrannos erected the goddess Larmene in year 256.

The stele is decorated by a broken relief of a human figure (Robert 1958: 112), presumably portraying the goddess (Mitchell 1995, 2: 46). The presence of a goddess in these dedications makes Jewish influence most improbable.

In a series of inscriptions from Carian Stratonicaea the god is designated as either Zeus or *Theos Hypsistos*, sometimes also as *theios*—divine;[37] this "divine and highest" god was usually accompanied by a messenger, θεῖος ἀγγελικός or θεῖος ἄγγελος (Robert 1958: 115–129; Mitchell 1995, 2: 45).[38]

Finally, communities of pagans, acknowledging the existence of many gods but worshipping only one, *Pantokrator* and *Hypsistos*, but not Father, were known to Gregory of Nyssa as *Hypsistiani* (*In Eunomium* 2). The use of the word *Pantokrator* points to Jewish influence (Mitchell 1995, 2: 51), which is even more palpable in the beliefs and practices of the Cappadocian sect of *Hypsistarii*, described by Gregory of Nazianzus, whose father was a member of this sect. They acknowledged *Pantokrator*, worshipped fire, and rejected idols and sacrifices. Although not practicing circumcision, they revered the Sabbath and abstained from certain kinds of food (Greg. Naz. *Or.* 18.5; cf. Schürer 1897: 205; Nock 1961: 64). The emphasis on the cult of fire testifies either to a direct Iranian influence on these sects (Schürer 1897: 221; Nock 1961: 64), or to their connection to the tradition of fire worship promulgated by the oracular centers of Didyma, Claros, and Oenoanda (Mitchell 1995, 2: 51).

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[36] For the commentary on θείῳ ἐπιφανεῖ see Robert 1958: 119.

[37] Τὸ θεῖον, "the divinity," sometimes had additional epithets: τὸ θεῖον ὅσιον καὶ δίκαιον, "the holy and righteous divinity" (Robert 1958: 112–119). Anonymous gods designated as *theos dikaios, theos hosios*, or *theos sozon* were conspicuously popular in Asia Minor (Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 69; *GGR* 2: 577; Mitchell 1995, 2: 25, 45; Riel 1991; 1992a; 1992b). Notable is also *TAM* 5.1.609, a dedication to the "Divine god," θεῷ Θείῳ (Mitchell 1995, 2: 46; cf. Robert 1958: 114).

[38] For the divine messenger, a mediator between men and the unattainable ruler of the universe, see Nilsson 1963: 115–118.

Thus, in Asia Minor the focus on the "most high" god was common for pagans, Jews, and Christians, as well as adherents of syncretic Judaeo-pagan cults. The pattern of the word usage in the epigraphic documents does not coincide with the Old Testament scriptures.

In Syria, an area where many important Diaspora communities existed for centuries, *Theos Hypsistos* or Zeus *Hypsistos* were both used as Greek designations for local *Baalim* (Seyrig 1940: 330; Merlat 1960: 114; Cumont 1914: 446; Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 61; Hengel 1974, 1: 297). In Phoenicia, the creator of mankind, whose local title was "the Most High," Ἐλιοῦμ, was designated Ὕψιστος in Greek, according to Philon of Byblos (Euseb. *Prepar.* 43.1; du Mesnil du Buisson 1970: 30). Cults of Zeus and *Theos Hypsistos* are attested epigraphically (Cumont 1914: 445, with references). Notable are two bronze votive hands offered to *Theos Hypsistos* (Cook 1914–40, 2: 886; cf. Picard 1961: 146). *Theos Hypsistos* who was offered an altar as θεὸς ὕψιστος οὐράνιος (*SEG* 14.1957) is identified as Mithra, an interpretation suggested by the dedication [Θε]ῷ ὑψίστῳ οὐρανίῳ ὑ[πάτῳ καὶ Ἡλίῳ ἀνικήτῳ?] Μί]θρᾳ . . . (Cook 1914–40, 2: 886). The Christian god was also called *Hypsistos* in Syria (e.g., *SEG* 32.1479).

In Alexandria, a major center of the Jewish Diaspora, where the translators of the Hebrew scriptures referred the epithet *Hypsistos* to Yahweh, and the god worshipped in synagogues was titled *Theos Hypsistos* as early as the second century BC (*CIJ* 1443; Cumont 1914: 446; Trebilco 1991: 133), a pagan *Theos Hypsistos* was also invoked together with Helios and the Nemeseis (Cook 1914–40, 2: 889; Cumont 1914: 447; Roberts, Skeat, and Nock 1936: 65).

In Palestine, where Jews revered their god as the Most High, עליון in Hebrew, ὕψιστος in Greek (Joseph. *Ant.* 16.6.2), Samaritans worshipped their god on Mount Gerizim as Zeus *Hypsistos* or simply *Hypsistos* (Cook 1914–40, 2: 888; Bikerman 1937/38: 196; Kippenberg 1971: 99–101; Montgomery 1968: 91; Hengel 1974, 1: 294, 296; Breytenbach 1997).[39] In the Negev desert, a bilingual dedication has been recently discovered, with the words Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ rendered in

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[39] The god worshipped there was referred to in several fashions. On the site of the temple a Greek dedication to Zeus *Olympios* (Bull 1968: 69–70), Greek invocations to the Only One God Who Helps, εἷς θεὸς ὁ βοηθῶν (Magen 1990: 82), and a Hebrew inscription יהוה (Yahweh, Magen 1990: 79) were discovered. The inscriptions were not found in situ, but since those discovered by Magen were utilized for the construction of a church, they must be pre-Christian.

Greek, and an appeal דכרית, meaning most probably "remember me," in the Palmyrene dialect of Aramaic (Ustinova and Naveh 1993). Since in Palmyre the Most High god was Baalshamin, the dedication was apparently left by his votary (Ustinova and Naveh 1993: 94). In one of the rock inscriptions from the neighboring Sinai, an invocation εἷς θεὸς ὁ βοηθῶν is accompanied by two letters, ΥΘ (Negev 1977: No. 242), which are interpreted as meaning ὕψιστος θεός (Negev 1977: 65). In view of the evidence presented in Negev's commentary, this dedication is most likely related to a syncretistic cult, and not to a purely Jewish religious background. Finally, an epitaph with two crosses from Moab (Canova 1954: No. 183), belonging to a "servant of *Theos Hypsistos*" (Θεοῦ θεράποντος ὑψίστου) is indisputably Christian.[40] An inscription on a mosaic at the entrance to a church in Palestine contained a quotation from a psalm with the words ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὕψιστος (*SEG* 35. 1553). Thus, Palestinian Jews, Jewish sympathizers, Samaritans, Christians, and Gentiles appear to have honored their gods as the "most high."[41]

The formula εἷς θεὸς,[42] which was widespread in early Christian monuments, occurred in Palestine mostly in pagan contexts and seems to be connected with Julian's struggle against Christianity (cf. E. Peterson 1926: 270–273). Thus, citizens of Ascalon erected a marble column with an acclamation glorifying the Emperor himself and his universal deity: εἷς θ[εός]. Νίκ[α], Ἰουλι[ανέ] (Avi-Yonah 1941–42: 160). Similar columns were found in Caesarea and Gerasa (Negev 1977: 63). An amulet discovered in Sinai bears an inscription εἷς θεὸς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά and features a horseman (E. Peterson 1926: 104). Amulets with similar representations discovered elsewhere may be attributed to syncretistic Judaeo-pagan cults (E. Peterson 1926: 96–109; *SEG* 34.1668). As Negev (1977: 63) observed, the εἷς θεός acclamation occurred in Palestine and Transjordan in Jewish,[43] Samaritan, Christian, and pagan inscriptions, whereas in Syria and in Egypt

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In Samaria the invocation εἷς θεὸς was also applied to a goddess, Kore: Εἷς θεὸς ὁ πάντων δεσπότης μεγάλη κόρη ἡ ἀνίκειτος (Flusser 1975).

[40] This inscription was first brought to my knowledge by Pau Figueras.

[41] Another anonymous celestial deity, θεὸς ἅγιος οὐράνιος, was worshipped in a shrine at Kadesh in the Galilee (Fischer, Ovadiah, and Roll 1984). This Holy Sky god was obviously the most prominent god of the Syro-Phoenician region, Baalshamin, as iconographic evidence from the temple confirms (Fischer, Ovadiah, and Roll 1984: 167; cf. Millar 1993: 293).

[42] On the phrase εἷς θεός see E. Peterson 1926.

[43] One inscription from Beth Shearim: Schwabe and Lifschitz 1967: No. 109.

most εἷς θεός inscriptions are Christian (E. Peterson 1926: 46–77). Elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, this formula was applied to Men, Sarapis, and other pagan gods (E. Peterson 1926: 227–270), alongside the Christian god and the god of Judaism.

Palestinian, Syrian, and Anatolian evidence clearly demonstrates that believers, living in the same country, did not see any problem in referring absolutely identical epithets to different anonymous deities, everyone to his own god. Various gods were worshipped as "the most high" in several areas. Utterly untenable is the opinion of Levinskaya (1984: 27) that "the cult of *Theos Hypsistos*, which was spread in Egypt, Greece, Asia Minor, Thrace, and the Northern Black Sea littoral, is to be considered as a single cult, having however local peculiarities. The cult of *Theos Hypsistos* was generally linked with Judaism."

As the evidence cited above demonstrates, a single cult has never existed. Given the general tendency of the epoch towards monotheism and the anonymous characterization of the deity, in every particular case the image of *Theos Hypsistos* emerged on a definite, usually local basis, with or without Jewish influence or participation of some other gods. Consequently, in every given area, including certainly the Bosporus, the cult of the local Most High God is to be studied on its own merits, with extreme caution when drawing on data from other regions. Moreover, as several anonymous gods could be revered under identical epithets in the same country, the legitimacy of generalizations about the cults of the anonymous gods even within a given cultural area can in no way be taken for granted.

2.2.3 *The Jews of the Bosporus and the Synods of Theos Hypsistos*

Since Schürer, it has been argued that Jews who lived in the Bosporan Kingdom must have influenced the cult of *Theos Hypsistos* there. As already demonstrated, the mere fact of Jewish presence in a given area does not necessarily induce local Gentiles to convert or even modify their traditional religious outlook and practices in favor of syncretic Judaeo-pagan cults. On the other hand, pagan *Hypsistos* cults could flourish in areas where Jews lived for centuries and attracted sympathizers.

2.2.3.1 *Jewish Inscriptions*

Jewish communities existed in Gorgippia, Panticapaeum, and Phanagoria.[44] In Gorgippia, three manumissions (*CIRB* 1123, AD 41; 1125, late first–early second century AD; 1126, 68? AD) attest to dedications of slaves to Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ παντοκράτορι εὐλογητῷ; in *CIRB* 1123 the slave is dedicated to a house of prayer, προσευχῇ. *Proseuche* is also mentioned in *CIRB* 1127 (early second century AD). In two documents, *CIRB* 1123 and 1126, manumittors swear ὑπὸ Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον, "by Zeus, Ge, and Helios." In *CIRB* 1124 (AD 59) the religion of manumittors is not indicated, but it is probably stated that the couple of slaves who were liberated, were Jews.[45]

In Panticapaeum, four manumissions (*CIRB* 70, AD 81; 71, first century AD; 72, first–early second century AD; 73, early second century AD), prescribe that the newly freed man piously attend the house of prayer, εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν θωπείας τε καὶ προσκαρτερήσεως,[46] and leave him under the guardianship of the synagogue of the Jews (τῆς συναγωγῆς τῶν Ἰουδαίων).[47]

The first complete manumission from Phanagoria has been recently discovered and published (Dan'shin 1993: 60; cf. Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev 1993). The inscription, dated to AD 41–52, states that a father and his two sons set free three of their slaves on the condition that they frequent the *proseuche*, under the guardianship of the Jewish community. A badly damaged manumission (*CIRB* 985, AD 16), containing the words θω[π]εί[ας ἕνεκα καὶ] προσ[κ]αρ[τερή]σεως, belongs to the same category and is also Jewish.

A manumission from the Taman (*CIRB* 1021, AD 105) in the form of a dedication Διεὶ καὶ Ἥρᾳ Κυλειδῶν, and *CIRB* 74, a manumission from Panticapaeum in the form of a dedication (θ)εῷ τῆς Μᾶς καὶ Παρ(θ)ένου (above, 1.3.1.2), are certainly pagan. The use of the oath, "by Zeus, Ge and Helios" in the latter document testifies to the obligatory form of the oath, that made a manumission judicially valid.

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[44] For a brief review of the evidence on Bosporan Jews see MacLennan 1996.

[45] To whom precisely the word Ἰουδαί[ο]υ[ς] - - - referred is unclear, as the stone is broken.

[46] For the interpretations of the stipulation χωρὶς εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν θωπείας τε καὶ προσκαρτερήσεως, see Nadel 1948.

[47] The opposition *proseuche-synagoge* is notable. In the Bosporan inscriptions, the former means the building, whence the latter implies the Jewish community.

The same formula, ὑπὸ Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον, used in *CIRB* 1123 and 1126, does not mean that the religion of the Jews who employed it was not orthodox (Schürer 1897: 205; Juster 1914, 1: 288; Cumont 1914: 448). Nevertheless, the form of the oath induces several scholars (Blavatskaya 1958; Boltunova 1971: 4; Tacheva-Hitova 1978b: 136) to regard these documents as pagan, although it has been convincingly argued (Lifshitz 1964: 159; comm. to *CIJ* 690; Goodenough 1956/57: 223; cf. Calderini 1908: 418–420) that the use of such clauses was a necessary formality which did not undermine the monotheistic faith; moreover, Nadel (1960) demonstrates that other details of the proceedings reflected in the Bosporan manumissions are also consistent with Greek, and not Talmudic, law.

Kraemer (1991: 146–147) and Bij de Vaate and van Henten (1996: 25) put forward additional considerations against an unequivocal Jewish attribution of *CIRB* 1123. To begin with, the Elephantine papyri, which make use of pagan oaths, are certainly earlier and belong to a different cultural milieu. Moreover, the epithet *Pantokrator*, belonging also to Christ, is sometimes applied to pagan gods (Kraemer 1991: 147; Bij de Vaate and van Henten 1996: 25). Words related to *eulogetos*, such as εὐλογέω and εὐλογία, occur in pagan inscriptions (Bij de Vaate and van Henten 1996: 25–26). Finally, *proseuche* sometimes occurs in pagan contexts (below, 2.2.3.3; Trebilco 1991: 136 with references; Bij de Vaate and van Henten 1996: 25).

However, in two Panticapaeum manumissions (*CIRB* 71; 73), the word *proseuche* appears together with reference to the Jewish community (συναγωγὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων). The word εὐλογητός occurs only in Jewish and Christian texts. Agglomeration of epithets, such as *Pantokrator* and *eulogetos*, together with an indisputably Jewish context of *CIRB* 71 and 73, makes Jewish affiliations of the discussed manumissions from Panticapaeum (*CIRB* 70–73), Gorgippia (*CIRB* 1123; 1125–1126), and Phanagoria (Dan'shin 1993; *CIRB* 985) fairly certain. A fragmentary ex-voto from Gorgippia, published by Boltunova (1982: 62–63; *SEG* 32.790), which contains the word παν]τοκράτωρ[ι (*sic*), was therefore set up by a member of the Jewish community of the city.

As to *CIRB* 71, Bellen (1965/6) and Lifshitz (1969: 96)[48] suggest an amendment of its text. The preserved part of the stone reads:

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[48] Accepted by Trebilco (1991: 155–156).

> - - - κου ἀφίημι ἐπὶ τῆς προσευ|χῆς Ἐλπία[ν] - - - α.της θρεπτ[ῆς]| ὅπως ἐστὶν ἀπαρενόχλητος| καὶ ἀνεπίληπτος ἀπὸ παντὸς| κληρονόμου χωρὶς τοῦ προσ|καρτερεῖν τῇ προσευχῇ ἐπι|τροπευούσης τῆς συναγωγῆς τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ θεὸν| σέβων.
>
> . . . liberate in the house of prayer Elpias . . . reared in the house, let him never be disturbed or captured by anyone of my heirs, on the condition that he attends the house of prayer, under the guardianship of the synagogue of the Jews, and reveres the God.

Nadel (1948: 204; 1958: 145; 1966: 18) and the editors of *CIRB* preserved the original reading; the phrase καὶ θεὸν σέβων is in their opinion synonymic to εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν θωπείας, the reverence of the house of prayer. Bellen (1965/6) and Lifshitz (1969) suggested a reinterpretation of the last two lines of the inscription, transforming θεὸν σέβων into θεοσεβῶν, and thus obtaining "the synagogue of Jews and god-fearers." The two groups are supposedly considered part of the same community, but must be named separately. However, as Reynolds and Tannenbaum (1987: 54) observed, the phrase τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ θεὸν σεβῶν does not necessarily mean separate categories; the two words could be a hendiadys, implying that Jews were defined as "god-fearing." Further, the word *theosebes* is not attested in Bosporan inscriptions, which renders the suggested conjecture even more arbitrary. In any event, there is no reason to adopt it, if one is not hunting occurrences of *theosebes* as a technical term. The lapse between ὅπως ἐστὶν ἀπαρενόχλητος καὶ ἀνεπίληπτος and καὶ θεὸν σέβων is indeed clumsy, but the language of the Bosporan inscriptions is rich in anacolythia,[49] and the text in its original form makes sense; hence, it does not need to be changed.[50]

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[49] In the supplement on the grammar of the Bosporan inscriptions, the editors of *CIRB* cite numerous examples of grammatic inconsistencies. To cite only a few: in *CIRB* 318 (first century BC–first century AD), two direct objects remain uncoordinated, Σάσαν ὁπλίτην γυνὴ Ταμύρα ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀτῆς ἀνδρὸς ἀνέστησεν τὴν στήλην. In *CIRB* 942 (third century AD) there is no predicate, and a participle is used instead of an indicative; further, in the same inscription σύν occurs with the genitive instead of the dative case (Latyshev 1922: 91; *CIRB* p. 830). For the grammatical mistakes in *CIRB* 64 see also below. These inscriptions originate from the cities of the European Bosporus. Numerous anomalies in the Tanais Greek are discussed below (2.4.1).

[50] In order to force the text of the inscription to fit his wishes, Bellen (1965/66: 174) suggests an additional arbitrary change: he proposes reading Ἐλπί(δ)α instead of Ἐλπία[ν] incised on the stone, thus making a female slave out of a male, which implies that the masculine participle σέβων refers to a woman. Since this is impossible, Bellen further argues, σέβων is to be interpreted as part of the word θεοσεβῶν.

Jewish cemeteries are likely to have existed in Panticapaeum since the late second century AD, when the first tombstones with Jewish names and symbols began to be set up (*CIRB* 724, 743, 746, 777); the text of *CIRB* 736 (third–fourth century AD) is bilingual Graeco-Hebrew. *CIRB* 746 and 777 were discovered in the same ancient cemetery, which was most probably Jewish (comm. to *CIRB* 746).

A number of late ancient-early mediaeval (fourth–ninth centuries AD) Jewish tombstones have been discovered in Phanagoria (Lyutzenko 1876), on the Taman peninsula, in South Crimea, in Central Crimea, and in Georgia (Khvol'son 1884: 129–143, 225–294; *CIRB* 1225).[51] Jews living in Phanagoria in the seventh century AD are mentioned by the mediaeval writers, Theophanes and Ibn Khordadbekh (Kulakovskiy 1898: 495; Nadel 1966: 24; Dan'shin 1993: 65), but they were then apparently connected with the Khazar presence.

2.2.3.2 *Jewish Names on the Bosporus*

Jewish names occur in the Bosporan inscriptions, almost exclusively from Panticapaeum (Σείμων, *CIRB* 724, second–third century AD; Ἰσαάκιος, *CIRB* 736, second–third century AD; Σαμυήλ, *CIRB* 743, fourth century AD; 777?, fourth century AD), Gorgippia (Σαφάτας, *CIRB* 1179, second–third century AD), and Hermonassa (Ὠνίας, *CIRB* 1076, first century AD, cf. Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev 1991: 120; 1996: 64). The only Jewish name which has been written on an object discovered in Tanais is a *dipinto* on an amphora: Ἰούδα(ς) (Shelov 1978: 49). This *dipinto* could have been written outside Tanais, or by a trader who visited the town, but did not live there.

Other names, which Levinskaya and Tohktas'yev include in their lists of Jewish names on the Bosporus (1991; 1996[52]), are either known as Syrian or Anatolian, or are of unclear origin. The name Ἐμμείς (*CIRB* 122), appearing in a versed epitaph where "the gods" are mentioned, is presumably Syrian (Zgusta 1955: No 755), as the authors themselves acknowledge (Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev 1991: 121). Γάδας (*CIRB* 372), on a tombstone which is decorated with a traditional relief, featuring a couple accompanied by two servants, is obscure, and four possible etymologies suggested by Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev do not clarify the situation. In any case, Bosporan Gadas was pagan. Ἴας (*CIRB* 1140; 1179) is known also in Egypt and Asia Minor; its provenance was unclear to Zgusta (1955: No. 1030). Βόχορος (*CIRB* 77 + 1136),[53] well-attested in Syria, is Semitic, but not necessarily Jewish; it may equally be Nabatean, Palmyrene, etc. (Zgusta 1955: No. 734). The name Γάδεις, born by the father of manumittor (*CIRB* 1124), is also Syrian; in Olbia a son of another Gadeis offered a dedication to Achilles *Pontarchos* (Knipovich and Levi 1968: No. 88).[54]

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[51] Regrettably, these stones, bearing Hebrew inscriptions, some of them decorated with seven-branched candlesticks, palm leafs, and other Jewish symbols, have not been studied since Khvol'son (Dan'shin 1993: 68); therefore, the dating of these monuments remains uncertain.

[52] I am grateful to Ephrat Habas-Rubin, who has drawn my attention to this publication.

Schürer (1897: 218) argued that in inscriptions of thiasotes from Tanais two Jewish names were mentioned: Ἀζαρίων (*CIRB* 1278; 1287) and Σαμβατίων (*CIRB* 1250; 1278; 1279; 1280; 1280; 1282). Sambation in fact occurs elsewhere (*CIRB* 1142; 1231); Σαμβίων (*CIRB* 36; 96; 98; 633; 1091; 1179; 1283) and Σαββίων (*CIRB* 98; 107; 146; 316; 408; 416; 509; 704) are also widely attested.

It is significant that patronymics of thiasotes bearing these allegedly Jewish names are Greek or Roman. Since it is maintained that the bearers of these two names were Jews, the argument that "god-fearers" were not supposed to change their names does not hold here.

As to the name Azarion, Vasmer (1923: 30), Abayev (1949: 168), and Zgusta (1955: 62) trace its Iranian roots. Nevertheless, Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev (1991: 119; 1996: 59–60) insist on its Jewish origin.

The name Sabbathion originally derives from Sabbath (Tcherikover 1954: 78–81, 97; *CPJ* 3: 43–56). The question whether numerous Sambathions all over the eastern Mediterranean received their names in honor of the Hebrew Sibyl Sambethe, or Sabbe (Youtrie 1944), or because of their parents' Sabbath-observing (Tcherikover 1954: 88–91; cf. Feldman 1993: 360), is of little bearing on the present argument. At the moment it is important that this name lost its Jewish connections (Tcherikover 1954: 97). In the Roman period it was no longer confined to Jews or Jewish sympathizers: in Egypt, there were Sambathions whose kinsmen were Egyptian only, and Sambations paying tax imposed on swine-owners (Tcherikover 1954: 79; *CPJ* 3: 43, 55). The name Sambas retained its original associations with Sabbath even less than Sambation (*CPJ* 3: 55), which is admitted by Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev (1991: 119; 1996: 62).

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[53] *Membra disiecta*, originally belonging to one Panticapaeum inscription of thiasotes (Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev 1991: 122).

[54] The treatment of this name by Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev (1991: 121–122) is very bizarre: on the one hand, they declare Gadeis from Gorgippia to be Jewish, since his son libereted Jewish slaves. On the other hand, they regard Gadeis of Olbia as being Jewish, although this man was the father of a pagan dedicant to Achilles. Levinskaya and Tokhtas'yev argue that not Gadeis of Olbia himself, but his son worshipped Achilles, and support their claim by suggesting that there was a *proseuche* in Olbia (the latter statement is also problematic, below, 2.2.3.3). Is the reader supposed to infer that the son from Gorgippia influenced his father more than the son from Olbia?

Thus, Sambation is not necessarily a Jewish name, but probably arrived at the Northern Black Sea littoral from the common Graeco-barbarian onomasticon (Zgusta 1969: 322). To be sure, Bosporan Sambations gave Gentile names to their sons (*CIRB* 36; 509; 1091; 1179; 1279). The versed epitaph of Sabbion son of Stephanos (*CIRB* 146, second century BC), making use of such poetic images as Musae mourning his death and his descent to Aïdes, was certainly composed for a pagan.

This onomastic survey demonstrates that the few Jews, whose names occur in Bosporan inscriptions, lived in large cities, which were open to outside influences. The two names of thiasotes which are considered Jewish by Schürer are very problematic; their non-Jewish affiliations are much more plausible.

2.2.3.3 *Sogous and His Proseuche: Jewish or Non-Jewish?*

Finally, it is argued that an inscription (*CIRB* 64) commemorating the erection of a *proseuche* by a vow θεῷ ὑψίστῳ ἐπηκόῳ, "to the Most High God, heedful," is Jewish (Erlikh 1928; Levinskaya 1988: 18). The stele, dated to AD 306, was discovered in Kerch. It attests to the construction of a house of prayer by Aurelius Valerius Sogous, a governor of Theodosia, σεβαστόγνωστο(ς), "honored by emperors."[55] As stated in the inscription, Sogous made his vow after he had been absent for a long time, had stayed in foreign countries for sixteen years, and had suffered numerous disasters (ὁ πολλὰ ἀποδημήσας καὶ ἀποστατήσας ἔτη δέκα ἓξ καὶ ἐν πολλοῖς θλίψεις γενόμενος, εὐξάμενος . . .). The mere singularity of Sogous' life demands caution in extending conclusions drawn from the wording of his dedications to other Bosporan documents.

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[55] On Sogous and his career see Gaydukevich 1949: 457–458.

Moreover, the identification of the *proseuche* as a Jewish synagogue is far from being unequivocal. As already indicated above, this word may designate not only a Jewish, but also a pagan house of prayer, this usage having probably developed under Jewish influence (Trebilco 1991: 136; Bij de Vaate and van Henten 1996: 25). A pagan *proseuche* is probably mentioned in a fourth-century BC inscription from Epidaurus concerning Aphroditium (*IG* IV^2. 1.106. I, l. 27). The word on the stone is indeed τᾶς ποτευχᾶς, yet Hiller von Gaertingen in his commentary interprets *poteucha* as *proseucha*, and observes that the word was not exclusively in Jewish usage, but was applied to a cult of a Greek goddess (cf. Trebilco 1991: 242, note 42).[56] An undoubtedly Christian church of Sts. Lot and Procopius is called *proseuche* in an inscription from Transjordan (Galier 1986: No. 98).

Geographically, the closest parallel to *CIRB* 64 is the Olbian *proseuche* inscription, *IOSPE* I^2 176.[57] The stone had already disappeared before Latyshev published *IOSPE* I; therefore the reading of the damaged inscription cannot be verified. The text attests to the erection of a *proseuche* by a collegium, presumably of archons:

> [᾿Αγαθῆι τύχηι? οἱ] περὶ Σ[άτυρον ᾿Αρτεμιδώ?]|ρου τὸ β′, Πουρθαῖ[ος τοῦ δεῖνος]|, ᾿Αχιλλεὺς Δημητ[ρίου]|, Διονυσιόδωρος ῞Ερ[ωτος]|, Ζώβεις Ζώβει ἄρχ[οντες]| τὴν προσευχὴν ἐ[πε]|σκεύασαν τῇ ἑαυ[τῶν]| προνοίᾳ στεγάσα[ντες]| ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μέχρι. . . .
>
> . . . archons repaired the house of prayer at their own expense, roofed it from the god (*sc.* the statue of the god) to. . . .

The inscription is considered pagan by most scholars (Latyshev: comm. to *IOSPE* I^2 176; 1920; Minns 1913: 468; Tolstoy 1918: 81–83, with the nineteenth-century bibliography); the god implied there is believed to be Achilles *Pontarches.* Erlikh questions this opinion, arguing that *proseuche* means Jewish house of prayer exclusively, and that the last line of the inscription, mentioning the statue of the god, did not contain the words ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μέχρι. . . . He maintains that this crucially important line was misread by Köhler, whose copy of the inscription was used by Latyshev (Erlikh 1928: 127). Moreover, archons mentioned in the inscription, in Erlikh's (1928: 127) opinion, were not city officials, but magistrates of the—assumed—Jewish community. *Archon* in fact occurred as a Diaspora term (Williams 1992: 304), and the existence of archons in the Jewish *politeuma* in Berenice (Cyrenaica) is attested epigraphically (Stern 1974–84, 1: 279; *CIJ Proleg.* LXXXVII). Yet in order to have archons, Jewish congregations evidently must have been considerable and organized, as that of Berenice. In Olbia, the inscription under discussion is the only piece of evidence of the assumed Jewish presence. Further, the board of archons in Olbia numbered five persons (*AGSP* 11), headed by a president (cf. οἱ περὶ . . . name, followed by four names); therefore it is much more plausible that the archons in question were city magistrates.

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[56] Levinskaya (1988: 18) provides an example of circlar reasoning, claiming that since *proseuche* cannot occur in a non-Jewish context, the word cannot mean a pagan temple in this inscription.

[57] Published by Frey as *CIJ* 682; for a discussion see also Kraemer 1991: 145, with recent bibliography.

CIRB 985, suggesting a restoration ἐ[πὶ] τ[ῆς προσευχῆς] ᾿Απόλ[λωνι], is too fragmentary to be used in the present argument.

Latyshev himself was familiar with various versions of the text; he (1921: 22) maintains that in *IOSPE* he used the reading *CIG* II 2079, based on the copy of Köppen, and not of Köhler. In any event, if the text of the inscription had seemed unreliable to Latyshev, he would have certainly indicated that. In *IOSPE* Latyshev offers a detailed defense of the reading he suggests.

Further, there are no Jewish names among the archons; the Jewish community is not mentioned. Erlikh's main argument, the exclusively Jewish nature of all the texts where the word *proseuche* occurs, proves to be inexact. Thus, the Olbian *proseuche* inscription is most likely pagan.

Finally, Lifshitz (1967: 19), who opts for the Jewish affiliation of the inscription, revitalizes Tolstoy's (1918: 82) reconstruction, which, it should be stressed, was suggested by the latter only *exempli gratia*: . . . οἱ] περὶ σ[υναγωγὸν Πόθον Θεοδώ]ρου τὸ β′ . . . . . Ζώβεις Ζώβει, Ἀρχ[ων Πόθου]. . . . This tentative reconstruction is censured as absolutely impossible by Latyshev (1921: 22–27), primarily because the long second line does not fit the space on the stone, and Archon as a personal name did not occur in Olbia, but also because *synagogos* was never listed first in the Bosporan collegia, which inspired this attempt. Moreover, as already demonstrated above (2.1.1.2), numerous *synagogoi* occur in pagan cult associations.

Thus, the Olbian house of prayer was presumably pagan, because it appears to have contained a god's statue and to have been repaired by the city archons.

Returning to the Bosporus, Sogous, who was not very particular about the choice of proper words—at least he did not trouble about grammar[58]—could have easily designated a non-Jewish building with the word, which was normally applied to Jewish synagogues. The epithets of the god do not supply any indication of the nature of Sogous' beliefs. Hence, attribution of this document to a religious milieu is dubious.

2.2.3.4 *Bosporan Jews and the Bosporan Thiasotes*

Jewish communities existed in the three largest Bosporan cities, Panticapaeum, Gorgippia, and Phanagoria. These communities appear to be rather small: the first Jewish cemetery seems to have been established in the late second century AD, and even then in Panticapaeum only. Indisputably Jewish names are very rare, and they occur almost exclusively in Panticapaum.

Tanais, about three hundered kilometers from Panticapaeum and other large Bosporan centers, has so far produced only one graffito with a Jewish name, which was perhaps inscribed on the amphora elsewhere, or belonged to a voyaging trader. If the entire male population of semi-barbaric Tanais consisted of Jewish sympathizers, which is implied by the theory of Schürer and his adherents, why has not this postulated Jewish or semi-Jewish community of Tanais left any traces? A hint at the existence of a synagogue, a single Jewish symbol on a stele? Greek and Roman sources, which refer to the Bosporan Kingdom often enough, and do not neglect its cults, have not preserved even a hint of such an important phenomenon as mass adoption of Judaism by the population of Tanais and other Bosporan cities.

On the Bosporus, Jews have left the great majority of the preserved manumissions, which is understandable, since only Jews had to set their coreligionists free every seventh year. Why did not "Judaizers" of Tanais observe this law? Women set their slaves free in Jewish manumissions from Gorgippia (*CIRB* 1125) and Panticapaeum

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[58] His inscription lacks a predicate, and he uses a participle instead of the indicative, οἰκοδομήσας rather than ᾠκοδόμησε; he also confuses cases, putting σεβαστόγνωστον in lieu of σεβαστόγνωστος, and genders, saying ἐν πολλοῖς θλίψεις in place of ἐν πολλαῖς θλίψεσι (Latyshev 1904: 27).

(*CIRB* 70). However, not a single female name occurs in the inscriptions of thiasotes, either in Tanais and elsewhere. Neither Scytho-Sarmatian nor Graeco-Roman tradition can account for the absence of women in these collegia: women played an important role in Scythian and Sarmatian society (above, 0.3; Rostovtzev 1918: 29, 123, 127–128; K. F. Smirnov 1964: 200–205); women were numerous among Jewish proselytes throughout the Roman Empire (Trebilco 1991: 104–126; Feldman 1992: 380); women were listed among members of many Graeco-Roman private cult associations.

An inevitable conclusion suggests itself: there was no direct connection between Judaism and the thiasoi of *Theos Hypsistos* in Tanais, and similar collegia elsewhere on the Bosporus. Θεὸς ὕψιστος παντοκράτωρ εὐλογητός or θεός of the Jewish manumissions and Θεὸς ὕψιστος of the Tanais thiasotes are distinct deities.[59]

2.2.4 *Conclusions*

The phrase *sebomenoi (phoboumenoi) ton theon* and the word *theosebeis* did not have a special technical sense, and did not necessarily imply pagan adherents of Judaism. They were rather used as common words and were applied to Gentiles, Christians, born Jews, Jewish proselytes, and Jewish sympathizers. Affiliation of persons described with these phrases with a certain faith may be established only when contexts supply additional indications concerning their religion. So far, there are no allusions to Jewish affiliations of the Tanais *eispoietoi adelphoi sebomenoi Theon Hypsiston.*

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[59] The conversions of the royal house in Adiabene and of Khazars are sometimes cited as parallel to the alleged conversion to Judaism of the semi-barbaric *Tanaitai*, or at least their adoption of certain elements of the Jewish faith. These cases are however totally different from that of the Bosporus. Firstly, it was only the royal family of Adiabene that converted (Joseph. *Ant.* 12.2.4–5; cf. Neusner 1964; Schiffman 1982; Feldman 1992: 377–378; Will and Orrieux 1992: 193–197), and only the Khazar nobility adopted the new religion, the majority of the population remaining Gentile, Muslim, or Christian (Dunlop 1954: 92–115; Will and Orrieux 1992: 201). "Princely conversions" of a few pre-Islamic Arab and Berber nobles also remained isolated (Will and Orrieux 1992: 197–210). In the Bosporan Kingdom, and especially in Tanais, the majority of the male population, if not all the male citizens, belonged to the synods of *Theos Hypsistos*. Secondly, the Judaism of the Adiabene rulers and Khazars is reported in written sources—and the entire ancient tradition is silent about the conversion of Bosporans. Finally, it has been convincingly argued that the pro-Parthian royal house of Adiabene embraced Judaism, the religion of a powerful minority in Mesopotamia, in order to found an international anti-Roman alliance, based on the support of the Jews of Palestine and of the Diaspora (Neusner 1964). As for the Khazars, their adoption of Judaism as the state religion was a political demonstration of independence and equality with the Arab Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire, and served as a response to the attempts of both Arab and Byzantine rulers to bend the Khazars to their will (Artamonov 1962: 264). There are no apparent reasons for the adoption of Judaism by the Bosporan Kingdom.

Identification of anonymous gods called the Most High demands great precaution. This epithet was employed by adepts of pagan cults, Jews and Christians. Asia Minor and the Near East provide numerous instances of different gods called *Hypsistos* in one and the same region. Thus, the fact that the god is titled *Theos Hypsistos* in some Jewish manumissions from large Bosporan cities does not imply that the worshippers of *Theos Hypsistos* in Tanais were connected with Judaism.

The evidence for the synods of *Theos Hypsistos* shows no traces of direct Jewish influence. True, Jews lived in the Bosporan Kingdom, but only in the large ports. There are no traces of Jewish presence in Tanais, where the Most High God was revered more than anywhere else. Thiasotes from Tanais and Jewish manumittors from Panticapaeum and Gorgippia worshipped distinct gods, but called them *Theos Hypsistos.* Thus, the theory of direct Jewish affiliations of the Bosporan thiasotes worshipping the Most High God is to be rejected.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MOST HIGH GOD AND SABAZIOS

2.3.1 *The Expulsion of the Jews from Rome and the Cult of Sabazios*

Intensive connections between *Theos Hypsistos* and Sabazios are assumed on two different grounds. According to the approach suggested by Cumont (1906) and later adopted by several scholars,[1] Jews (*GGR* 2: 662; Bickerman 1958: 147–149; Macrea 1959; 329–330; Leon 1960: 3; Picard 1961: 146–147; Siegert 1973: 144; Stern 1974–84, 1: 359) or Jewish sympathizers (Hengel 1974, 1: 263; Simon 1976: 53–55; Feldman 1992: 379) associated Sabazios with either Sabaoth, or Sabbath, or both. For those who consider *Theos Hypsistos* the Greek version of the Old Testament god, the logical inference is the existence of the theocrasy between Sabazios and Yahweh (*GGR* 2: 662; Hengel 1974, 1: 263).

The weakest point of this argument, which in fact compromises the construction as a whole, is the extreme unreliability of its keystone (Kraabel 1978: 28; Levinskaya 1984: 26; 1987: 69; Trebilco 1991: 141). The entire approach is based on the quotation from the Roman compiler Valerius Maximus (1.3.2), which reads in most modern editions (Lane 1979: 35):

> *Cn. Cornelius Hispalus praetor peregrinus . . . edicto Chaldaeos citra decimum diem abire ex urbe atque Italia iussit . . . Idem Iudaeos, qui Sabazi Iovis cultu Romanos inficere mores conati erant, repetere domos suas coegit.*
>
> Cn. Cornelius Hispalus[2] praetor peregrinus . . . ordered in his edict that the Chaldaeans leave the city and Italy within ten days. . . . He also compelled Jews, who tried to infect Roman customs with the worship of Sabazios Jupiter, to return to their homes.

These events took place in 139 BC. The relevant passage falls in a long lacuna, and its text results from an insertion into this lacuna of part of an epitome of Valerius Maximus, written by Julius Paris, who lived ca. AD 400. This epitome exists in two manuscript versions. One of them mentions the expulsion of Chaldaeans and Jews, the latter worshipping Jupiter Sabazios; the other one recounts the banning of Chaldaeans and Jews, but does not touch on Sabazios (Lane 1979: 36). The text amended in accordance with the first version is adopted by the majority of modern editors of Valerius Maximus. In addition we possess another epitome, by Januarius Nepotianus, who in all likelihood lived in the fourth or fifth centuries AD. He speaks of the expulsion of Chaldaeans and Jews, but again, does not say a word about Sabazios (Lane 1979: 36; cf. Stern 1974–84, 1: 358–360). Thus, of the three manuscript traditions of the relevant passage in Valerius Maximus, only one implies Sabazios-worship by Jews (Lane 1979: 36).

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[1] For the bibliography see Bickerman 1958: 146; Hengel 1974, 1: 263, note 43; and Lane 1979.

[2] More accurately Cn. Cornelius Scipio Hispanus, Siegert 1973: 144; Stern 1974–84, 1: 358.

Lane (1979: 37) makes a convincing case, arguing that Valerius Maximus in his original text listed three groups banned from Italy: Chaldaeans, Sabazios-worshippers, and Jews. Julius Paris chose to mention the first and the second categories, whence Nepotianus preserved the reference to the first and the third groups. Some mediaeval copyist of Julius Paris, who presumably had the epitome of Nepotianus before him, decided to improve his original and to adduce Jews; it was this scribe who confused Sabazios and Sabaoth and made Sabazios-worshippers of the Italian Jews. This suggestion is certainly much more plausible than that the author of this mistake (or association) was the source of Valerius Maximus, probably Livius (Stern 1974–84, 1: 357) or Valerius Maximus himself, who lived in a time when the Sabazios cult was widely practiced (Lane 1979: 35).

Even if Lane's hypothesis is rejected, the passage in question is so problematic textually that it certainly cannot be used as a basis for further speculations on the theocrasy of Sabazios and *Theos Hypsistos* (cf. Johnson 1984: 1602).[3] This line of argument should therefore be abandoned.

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[3] For analyses of Plutarch's (*Quaest. conv.* 4.6.1) comparison between Dionysos and the Jewish god, see Goodenough 1953–68, 6: 133–134; Stern 1974–84, 1: 546; Kraabel 1978: 28; and Johnson 1984: 1605.

For the criticism of minor arguments of Cumont and those who follow him, see Lane 1979: 36–37; Johnson 1984: 1605–1607; and Trebilco 1991: 141. For the suggestion that the Sabazios-Sabaoth theocrasy originated from Pergamon, see Bickerman 1958: 144–151.

Kraabel's (1978: 29–31) study of the archaeological and epigraphic materials from the synagogues of Asia Minor reveals no traces of any Jewish interest in Sabazios.

2.3.2 *The Pirot Inscription*

An entirely different approach to the identification of the Bosporan *Theos Hypsistos* with Sabazios was first suggested by Latyshev (comm. to *IOSPE* II. 246). Since then, several scholars have ascribed Thracian origin to *Theos Hypsistos*, who is compared either with Sabazios (*ADZh* 429–432; Tacheva-Hitova 1978b) or with the Thracian hero (Salač 1955). Latyshev based his argument on the so-called Pirot inscription, first published by von Domaszewski (1886: 238; *IGB* IV. 1924; *EC* No. 4: 11). This dedication was offered θεῷ ἐπηκόῳ ὑψίστῳ (to the heedful Most High God) in Turres[4] (modern Pirot) by a *koinon*, headed by a priest and a *prostates*. The list of the members is broken; it ends with the words ΘΙΑ[- - -]Σεβαζιανός ΘΕ[- - -]ΤΟΥΤΑΣ - -. Domaszewski restored them as θίασος Σεβαζιανός. His opinion was adopted by Latyshev, Rostovtzev (*ADZh* 432), Macrea (1959: 339), Mihailov (*IGB* IV. 1924), Picard (1961: 175), Milchev (1977: 61), Johnson (1984: 1606), and others. This reading implies that the *koinon* was also called thiasos, which indeed is quite plausible,[5] and that the Most High God worshipped by its members was Sabazios. A suggestion that Sebazianos[6] is a proper name, supported by Gerov, Tacheva-Hitova (*EC* 178, 197, 204, with references), and Levinskaya (1984; 1986; 1987), connotes that the god remains anonymous. Since the crucial line of the Pirot inscription is mutilated, it seems prudent not to use it as an argument in the discussion of the identification of *Theos Hypsistos*. Further, even if the Pirot god is indeed Sabazios, this does not warrant any inferences concerning *Theos Hypsistos* of the Bosporus.

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[4] For the identification of the site see *EC* 178, 197. Nilsson (*GGR* 2: 662) and Colpe (1967: 1292) erroneously indicate Serdica as the provenance of this inscription.

[5] E.g., in fourth-century BC Attica: *IG* II^2 2443: κοινὸν θιασωτῶν. The same association defined itself as θίασος ὀργεώνων (Dow and Gill 1965) and later κοινὸν ὀργεώνων (*IG* II^2 1246). Beginning from the first century BC distinctions between the words ὀργεῶνες, θιασῶται, and ἐρανισταί ceased to be observed (Ziebarth 1896: 136–138; Poland 1909: 13; W. S. Ferguson 1944: 134).

On the Bosporus, members of synods called themselves thiasotes, and not *synodeitai*.

[6] Which occurs elsewhere in Thrace: *IGB* IV 2224 (*EC* 178).

2.3.3 *Theos Hypsistos on the Western Black Sea Littoral*

2.3.3.1 *Sabazios in Thrace and Moesia Inferior*

Since the Pirot inscription does not attest unequivocally to the association between the Thracian Most High God and Sabazios, the connection between the local *Theos Hypsistos* and Sabazios becomes problematic. In the first centuries AD, Sabazios was certainly worshipped in Thrace and Moesia Inferior (Milchev 1977; Johnson 1984: 1585) as Dionysos Sabazios (Jeanmaire 1951: 412–431) and Zeus or Jupiter Sabazios (*EC* Nos. 3: 4–6, 10, 13, 20–22), who was also called μέγιστος (*IGB* II. 678, *EC* No. 3: 4), κύριος (*IGB* IV. 1927, 2034, 2196, 2233; *EC* Nos. 3: 8, 12, 15, 16), or ἐπήκοος (*IGB* II. 677, IV. 1955, 2023, 2196; *EC* Nos. 3: 3, 9, 11, 15). Zeus or Jupiter Sabazios was also worshipped in Dacia (Macrea 1959; Milchev 1977: 62; Johnson 1984: 1601).[7]

Several votive hands, discovered in Thrace, Moesia Inferior, and Dacia (Macrea 1959: No. 3; Milchev 1977; *EC* Nos. 3: 2, 2bis, 18, 19, pls. 51, 59), are shaped in the gesture of *benedictio latina* and are usually covered with representations of various animals, among them always an eagle and a snake. The Thracian Sabazios is portrayed in the two registers of the third-century AD Philippopolis stele (*EC* No. 3.17, pl. 58), surrounded by gods and demi-gods, such as Sol, Luna, Pan, Tuche, Hermes, and Daphne, and fighting evil in the guise of a rider-god.[8] This complex divinity, both solar[9] and chthonic, appears as a ruler of the world and a protector of the plant and animal kingdoms (Milchev 1977: 66, 67; *EC* 172; cf. Johnson 1984: 1592, 1599).

On a first-century BC stele, which is an offering to Zeus Sabazios and originates either from Thrace or from western Asia Minor (Cook 1914–40, 2: 282, pl. 19; *EC* No. 3: 22, pl. 51), the god is mounted, holds a thunderbolt and two spears, and faces a tree, with an altar blazing in front of it. An eagle is perched on the tree, a snake coiled on it, and a krater rests next to the altar. Representation of Sabazios on horseback is certainly unusual; this iconography is believed to have been prompted by the Balkan traditional depictions of riding gods or heroes (*EC* 177).[10] The scene is in fact reminiscent of numerous representations of the Thracian hero,[11] mounted on a standing horse and facing an altar, a tree with a coiling snake behind it (*CCET* Nos. 15, 25, 33, 34, 41, 58, 62, 162, 163).

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[7] For the common equation of Sabazios with Zeus-Jupiter, see Johnson 1984: 1588–1560.

[8] Cf. Picard 1961: 140. Lane (*CCIS* II D3, pl. 40.2) however classifies this monument as "dubious."

[9] Tacheva-Hitova (*EC* 188) interprets the Thracian mounted Apollo as a hypostasis of Dionysos-Sabazios.

2.3.3.2 *Theos Hypsistos in Thrace and Moesia Inferior*

The cult of *Theos Hypsistos* reveals however only a few features in common with the cult of Sabazios. In Thrace and in Moesia Inferior *Theos Hypsistos* was very popular. The emphasized devotion of the Thracians and especially of their kings to the cult of the Most High God is important for the definition of the nature of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult on the Bosporus, since the Bosporan royal family was related to the Thracian dynasty[12] (Rostovtzev 1913: 23; Rostovtzeff 1919c: 107; Saprykin 1984), and numerous Thracians lived on the Bosporus, as demonstrated by the frequent occurrence of Thracian names in Bosporan inscriptions.

Two dedications for the sake of the reigning kings were erected in the first half of the first century AD. The first (*IGRR* I. 777; *IGB* I^2 399: comm., *EC* No. 4: 18) was offered by G. Iulius Proclus

> [Θεῶ]ι ἁγίωι ὑψίστωι| ὑπὲρ τῆς ῾Ροιμη[τάλ]κου καὶ Πυθο|δωρίδος ἐκ τοῦ κα|τὰ τὸν Κοιλα[λ]ητικὸν| πόλεμον κινδύνου| σωτηρίας . . .
>
> To the Holy Most High God for saving Rhoemetalcas and Pythodoris from the perils of the war against Celaletae . . .

The war with the rebel Celaletae, Odryssae and Dii was in AD 21. The dynasts mentioned in the dedication are most probably Rhoemetalcas II and his wife Pythodoris, daughter of the Bosporan princess Antonia Tryphaena (*EC* 201).[13]

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[10] For the Sabazios-Heros syncretism in Thrace see Milchev 1977: 72–73.

[11] The standard work is still Kazarow (1938); recent materials are assembled in *CCET*.

[12] Stressed in particular in an inscription of the Bosporan king Rhescouporis II (*CIRB* 53), claiming that he originated ἀφ' ῾Ηρακλέου[ς] καὶ Εὐμόλπου τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος, Eumolpos being a Thracian hero.

Dynastic links between Thrace and the Bosporus are best attested in the dedication from Apollonia (*IGB* I^2 399; *IGR* 1503; Saprykin 1984).

[13] For a different suggestion see Saprykin 1984.

The second dedication, dated to AD 37/38–45 (*EC* No. 4: 21), presumably originates from Neapolis (Thrace):

> Διὶ ὑψίστῳ εὐχαρισ[τή]ριον ὑπὲρ| κυρίου βασιλέως Ῥοιμητάλκα Κότυος| καὶ τῶν τεκνῶν αὐτοῦ· Εὔτυχος ὁ ἐπὶ| τῶν λατόμων καὶ οἱ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πάντες.
>
> To Zeus the Most High thanksgiving offering for (our) lord the king Rhoemetalcas son of Cotys and his children: Eutychos the head stonecutter and all his subordinates.

Although in both cases the dedicators are not the kings themselves, but people of their court (ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν λατόμων is presumably a governmental office), it is inconceivable that dedications for the sake of the kings had been offered to a god who was not regarded as a divine patron of the dynasty. This Most High God venerated by the Thracian rulers was a pagan deity, since one dedication is addressed to *Theos Hypsistos* and the other to Zeus *Hypsistos.*

In Serdica (modern Sofia), a second-century AD shrine of the god has been unearthed (*EC* Nos. 4: 3–9). The remains include parts of the building; architectural elements; two depictions of the god and an eagle in relief; three representations of eagles on semicircular bases; and a metal scepter (*EC* 192). Inscriptions discovered in the shrine are dedications—[θ]εῷ ἐπηκόῳ ὑψίστῳ (*IGB* IV. 1941; *EC* No. 4: 4) or θέῳ ὑψίστῳ (*IGB* IV. 1942–1944, 1946; *EC* Nos. 4: 5, 7, 8, 9), as well as to Asclepius (*IGB* IV. 1935). A dedication incised on one of the altars (*IGB* IV. 1945; *EC* No. 4: 8) mentions a priest, εἱερεύς. Of the three preserved names of dedicants one is of a Roman citizen of Greek origin (Πομπώνιος Θεόδουλος Λόπου, *IGB* IV. 1941), one is Thracian (Διζου . . ., *IGB* IV. 1942), and one Greek (Πάνθια, *IGB* IV. 1943).[14] Panthia's dedication is noteworthy since it attests that a woman (and evidently of slave origin) was among the worshippers of *Theos Hypsistos.* Further, her altar is topped with three lamps, hewn into the stone (*EC* pl. 65). A base, again with three Roman lamps hollowed out in its top surface, was also discovered in the shrine (*EC* No. 4: 6, pl. 65). One of the most fascinating finds is a pedestal with a high relief featuring an eagle carrying a male bust on his outstretched wings (*EC* No. 4: 3).

Lamps were widely used in Hellenistic and Roman cult practices, as well as in native Thracian ceremonies (*EC* 213), hence their discovery in the Serdica shrine cannot be diagnostic. As to the portrayal of a man carried by an eagle, various solar deities, such as Helios, Jupiter Heliopolitanus, Baal-Shamin, Zeus, and Sarapis were represented in this posture in the eastern Mediterranean (Cook 1914–40, 1: 191, fig. 138; 2: 102–103, fig. 64; Tacheva-Hotova 1983: 192).[15] Although the same design was also used in the depictions of the emperors' deification (Cook 1914–40, 2: 102–103; *EC* 193), the Serdica relief, unearthed in a shrine, depicted almost doubtlessly a god. Since Zeus Sarapis borne by an eagle was represented on coins of Tomi, and *Hypsistos* Sarapis enjoyed a cult in the Balkan area (*EC* 51, 209, with references), it is reasonable to assume that this deity influenced the cult of the Serdica shrine.

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[14] Tacheva-Hitova (*EC* 195) observes that the names of Theodoulos and Panthia "bear the mark of monotheism."

In the territory of Serdica a third-century AD column with a dedication of Dorzinthes Son of Dines to Zeus *Hypsistos* (*IGB* IV. 2014; *EC* No. 4: 10) was discovered. Evidently the same pious person offered three additional (*EC* 196) dedications discovered in Thrace. A slab from a sanctuary of Asclepios (*EC* 196) features a relief of a Thracian horseman and an inscription Δορζενθης Δ . . . εὐχήν (*IGB* III. 1209). Two votive tablets were discovered in the same area, near Philippopolis (modern Plovdiv). The first, with a relief of a god holding a scepter and a patera, next to a blazing altar, and an eagle facing the scepter, bears an inscription: Κυρίῳ Διὶ Δορζενθες Δινεος εὐχήν (*IGB* III. 966). The second relief, which features the god in the same posture, with an eagle perching on an additional altar (Tačeva-Hitova 1978a: fig. 3), is accompanied by a prayer: Κυρίῳ Διί. Δορζενθες Δινεος δῶρον. Ἐκ τῶν δειράντων με ἐγδίκησον ἐν τῷ σῷ δρώμῳ (To Lord Zeus. The gift of Dorzenthes son of Dines. Avenge in your course those flaying my skin; *IGB* III. 965). Although the invocation is rendered in language resembling that of the Septuagint, Dorzenthes' beliefs are obviously free of any Jewish influence; the phrase resembles prayers to other pagan gods, which occur in Thracian dedications (*EC* 197).

Since dedications on behalf of the Thracian dynasts were addressed alternatively to Zeus and *Theos Hypsistos*, it is quite plausible that

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[15] An Iranian deity depicted as an august male figure with open wings and often a fan-shaped tail (Persepolis reliefs, etc.), was traditionally interpreted as Ahura Mazda (Cook 1914–40, 1: 208–209; Gnoli 1989: 150, with references). Boyce's (1985a: 686) suggestion that it be regarded as *xvarenah* is criticized by Gnoli, who re-establishes the interpretation of the winged sun-disc with a human figure as a depiction of Ahura Mazda (1989: 150).

Zeus of Dorzenthes' dedication is the *Theos Hypsistos* of the monuments from the Serdica shrine. Eagles on the two reliefs, as well as fire blazing on the altar, which is reminiscent of the lamps on Panthia's altar, add probability to this assumption.

The *Hypsistos* cult in Thrace is attested by additional dedications to *Theos Hypsistos* (*IGB* III. 937, 1431, IV. 2111; *SEG* 24. 905; *EC* No. 4: 13, 14, 12, 17) and to Zeus *Hypsistos* (*IGB* I^2 371; II. 780; *EC* No. 4: 1, 15, 16, 19, 20). Eagles decorate dedications to both: an eagle is preserved on the relief of a dedication to *Theos Hypsistos* (*IGB* III. 937); it is depicted on a pedestal offered to Zeus *Hypsistos* (*EC* No. 4: 19); another dedication to Zeus *Hypsistos* features an eagle perched on the head of a bull (*EC* No. 4: 20, pl. 69). The latter combination is adopted perhaps from the iconography of Jupiter Dolichenus (*EC* 207; cf. Cook 1914–40, 1: figs. 480–481; Merlat 1960: 108; Hörig 1984b: 2141; *CCID*). The stele from Odessos, offered to Zeus *Hypsistos*, features a scene of a bull sacrifice (*IGB* II. 780; *EC* No. 4: 1).

In one case a dedication to *Hypsistos* (neither the word "Zeus" nor *theos* is preserved) was offered by θιασίτιοι (*sic, EC* No. 4: 2). Among the dedicants are Thracians, Greeks, and Romans (*EC* 210–211), prominent families (the house of Auphidii of *IGB* IV. 2111; see *EC* 199), and freedmen. Chronologically, dedications to Zeus *Hypsistos* are earlier than those to *Theos Hypsistos*, the most ancient monument being the offering to Zeus *Hypsistos* from Odessos (*IGB* II. 780, second century BC).

Tacheva-Hitova (*EC* 205–206) demonstrates that the phrasing of the Thracian *Hypsistos* inscriptions is essentially the same as in inscriptions associated with the Thracian Horseman, Apollo, Asclepius, and Sabazios. It shows only minor traces of Oriental influence, which finds its expression in the use of such epithets as *despotes* (*IGB* I^2 371) and *hagios*[16] (*IGB* I^2 399), and perhaps in the wording of Dorzenthes' prayer.

Although Zeus *Hypsistos* was one of the most venerated gods in neighboring Macedonia (above, 2.2.2.2; Cook 1914–40, 2: 878; Tačeva-Hitova .1978a: 61–70), and the first Thracian *Hypsistos* monuments were addressed to Zeus, Tacheva-Hitova (*EC* 210) supposes that the transition to the anonymous *Theos Hypsistos* in the first century

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[16] Apollo and Artemis were however called *hagnoi* in Thrace (*IGB* I^2 306; 388).

AD was due to Bosporan influence. This assumption appears to be extremely difficult to defend against the background of intensive interaction between Thrace and Asia Minor, with its own *Hypsistos* cults.

Tacheva-Hitova (Tačeva-Hitova 1978a: 61, 69; *EC* 214) suggests that cults of Thracian Sabazios and Apollo were involved in the emergence of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult in the province, which is a priori probable, but troublesome to prove. In fact, there is no unequivocal evidence of a connection between the cults of Sabazios and *Hypsistos* in Thrace. The developed iconography of the Sabazios cult did not affect the imagery of the *Hypsistos* cult. Eagles, shown on *Theos Hypsistos* monuments, certainly do not belong exclusively to Sabazios.[17] Even if the monuments of Zeus *Hypsistos* are also considered, we find on them depictions of the god standing near a blazing altar and the combination bull-eagle, which do not necessarily attest to a connection with Sabazios. Epithets of *Hypsistos* are not specific to Sabazios, as well. All the *Hypsistos* monuments lack the images which appear on the reliefs and votive hands dedicated to Sabazios. The same is true concerning assumed associations with Thracian Apollo: in the *Hypsistos* monuments no characteristic symbols or epithets of Apollo have been discerned thus far.

In any event, Thracian monuments reveal no specific traces of Jewish influence, and in the second–third centuries AD the Jewish Diaspora is attested neither in Thrace nor in Moesia Inferior (*EC* 215). It is thus impossible to argue that the emergence of Thracian henotheism was provoked by direct Jewish influence. The cult of the Thracian *Theos Hypsistos* appears as a development of the local worship of Zeus. This cult has evidently absorbed some foreign features. They are reflected in the iconography of the god carried by an eagle, borrowed probably from Sarapis, and of an eagle perching on a bull's head, contributed as it seems by Jupiter Dolichenus. The language of the inscriptions also betrays some Semitic derivations. Notwithstanding these adaptations, the Thracian *Theos Hypsistos* remained basically a Balkan deity.

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[17] The only monument which might indicate this connection is a hollow clay object (*EC* No. 4: 22, pl. 69), shaped as an aedicule. Between its pilasters is a large krater, with an eagle perching on it. Above the gable, there are small semi-spherical cups. However, the association of this object with the shrine of *Theos Hypsistos* in Serdica is dubious (*EC* 203).

2.3.3.3 *Anonymous Gods in Dacia*

In Dacia, dedications to *Hypsistos* originate from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa and from Tomi. An altar to Zeus *Hypsistos epekoos* was set up by Aelius Apollinarius, ἐπίτροπος (presumably procurator of the province), and his wife Maxima (Sanie 1977: No. 1; 1978: 1109–1110), another altar belongs to *Theos Hypsistos epekoos* and was erected by Aelia Cassia (*SEG* 25.820; Sanie 1977: No. 2). A votive plaque, offered θεῷ ὑ[ψίστῳ?] and featuring a human ear in relief (Sanie 1977: No. 3; 1978: pl. 219: 2), seems to clarify in a literally palpable manner what *theos epekoos*, "the heeding god," meant to his worshippers. A dedication to *Theos Hypsistos* was offered also in Tomi (*SEG* 26.839). Outside Dacia, P. Aelius Arrianus Alexander, βουλευ(τὴς) Δακίας κολωνείας Ζερμιζεγ[ε]θούσης, set up a dedication to *Theos Hypsistos* in Mytilene (Cook 1914–40, 2: 882). *Theos Hypsistos epekoos* of Sarmizegetusa, called alternatively Zeus *Hypsistos*, and offered as it seems reliefs of ears, may hardly be affiliated with the god of Judaism, as Condurachi (1975: 194) and Sanie (1978: 1112) argue.[18] This god may rather be compared with the Thracian Zeus and *Theos Hypsistos*, and with Jupiter *exsuperantissimus* or *aeternus*, the latter extremely popular in this province.

An altar *Iovi summo exsuperantissimo divinarum humanarumque rerum rectori fatorumque arbitre* . . . (to Jupiter the Highest the Most Exalted, ruler of divine and human affairs, arbiter of destinies . . ., *CIL* III. 1090, Sanie 1977: No. 4) was discovered in Apulum. Jupiter *Optimus Maximus*, with further epithets indicating his provenance, such as *Heliopolitanus, Turmazgades, Erusenus*, etc., was much venerated in Dacia (Condurachi 1975: 193–194, with references).

Deus Aeternus was offered dozens of inscriptions and altars in seven towns of Dacia,[19] either as an anonymous Eternal God, or as Jupiter *optimus maximus deus aeternus* (Sanie 1978: 1096–1106). This god was also titled *sanctissimus* (Sanie 1978: 1098). In Micia Jupiter *optimus maximus* and even *Silvanus* are called eternal gods (Sanie 1978: 1103), in Ampelum the title was bestowed upon Jupiter *Dolichenus* (Condurachi 1975: 192; Sanie 1978: 1104). In Sarmizegetusa *Deus Aeternus* is sometimes accompanied by Juno and *angeli*[20] (Condurachi 1975: 194; Sanie

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[18] Sanie (1987: 1112) nevertheless notes the extreme scarcity of Jewish relics originating from Dacia—three incidentally found pieces.

[19] Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, Apulum, Ampelum, Germisara, Micia, Tibiscum, and Sighisoara (Sanie 1978: map on p. 1093).

[20] For the divine messengers of the supreme gods see Nilsson 1963.

1978: 1099–1100). Among the worshippers of the Dacian Eternal God are persons bearing Greek and Roman names, Roman soldiers, people serving in the imperial administration, and freedmen (Sanie 1978: 1107).

The Dacian *Deus Aeternus* seems to be affiliated with several Oriental counterparts of Jupiter. He is actually identified as the god of Doliche, a Syrian deity worshipped in Rome as Jupiter Dolichenus *Optimus Maximus Sol Aeternus* (Cook 1914–40, 1: 604–633; *CCID*; Bilde 1990: 159). Further, *Deus Aeternus* shows notable affinity with Palmyrene Baalshamin, מר עלם, Lord of Eternity (or of the Universe), named Zeus the Most High in the bilingual inscriptions (above, 2.2.2.2; Sanie 1978: 1094). In fact, Palmyrene gods had a temple in Sarmizegetusa (Sanie 1978: 1098). Dacian dedications to *Deus Aeternus* do not reveal connections with *Deus Aeternus-Aion-Saeculum* of Mithraism, who possessed a developed iconography, while the only Dacian monument accompanied by a representation of any sort is a relief of an eagle, framed with a wreath (Sanie 1978: 1106, pl. 219: 1). Sanie (1978: 1101) suggests that the Dacian *Deus Aeternus*, worshipped together with a female consort and associated with Jupiter in his multiple Oriental disguises, be identified with Yahweh, due to a dedication to *Deus Aeternus*, offered in Intercisa (Pannonia) by *pr(aepositus) st(ationis) Spondilla synag[ogae]* (*CIJ* 677); this reasoning is scarcely convincing. As demonstrated above, different gods could receive identical epithets, the case of *Deus Aeternus* in the Danubian provinces providing an additional example of such a situation.[21]

In summary, the most high gods of the Western Black Sea littoral (Thrace, Moesia Inferior, Dacia) do not reveal any affiliations with the Jewish god, or at least no direct links. On the contrary, their cults appear to have emerged either as an evolution of local cults of supreme gods, or as an adaptation of Oriental pagan cults, or most probably as a combination of both trends. The assumed dominant role of Sabazios in the development of the Thracian *Theos Hypsistos* cult is not supported by convincing evidence.

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[21] For pagan stress on the immortality of cosmic gods see Bickerman 1958: 156.

2.3.4 *Sabazios and the Bosporus*

As shown, a Balkan provenance for the supposed affiliation of the Bosporan *Theos Hypsistos* and Sabazios is unsubstantiated. There is also no direct evidence attesting to the cult of Sabazios on the Bosporus (above, 1.3.2.7).

However, it is suggested that a cult table, discovered in Cytaeum (*CIRB* 942; Gajdukevic 1971: pl. 107) be related to the cult of Sabazios. The two supports of the horizontal slab with the inscription are shaped as fronts of sphinxes, whose breasts are replaced by acanthus foliage. What is most important, the inscription itself is sealed with a depiction of an eagle clutching a snake. The text, dated to AD 234, reads:

> ⟨ι⟩᾿Αγαθῆι τύχηι. Θεῶι βροντῶντι ἐπηκόωι ἡ πατρὶς Κοιτειτῶν⟨ι⟩ τὸν ναὸν σὺν τοῦ παρακειμένου| οἴκου καὶ τοῦ περιαύλου ἐποίησεν ἐκ θεμελίων ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἀναλωμάτων ἐπιμεληθέντος τοῦ ἔργου| ᾿Ιουλίου Συμμάχου Στρατονείκου τοῦ πρὶν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἱππῶνος⟨ι⟩ ὃς καὶ ἀνέθηκεν χρυσοῦς δέκα δύο ὧν τοὺς| τόκους καταχωρεῖν κατὰ πᾶν ἔτος εἰς τὸ θεῖον πιστεύσας ᾿Ιουλίω(ι) Ψυχαρίωνι τῶ(ι) ἱερεῖ| ἐν τῶι αλφ´ ἔτει καὶ μηνὶ Δείωι α´.
>
> With good fortune. To the Thundering Heedful God the community[22] of Cytaeans[23] built a temple with the adjoining house and the fence at their own expense; Julius Symmachos son of Stratoneicos,[24] formerly the head equerry, supervised the work and dedicated twelve gold coins (*aurei*), trusting Julius Psycharion the priest to invest annually the interests thereof in the sacred (affairs) in the year 531, on the first of Deios.

Eagle and snake are most common attributes of Sabazios, depicted on his votive plaques, hands, etc. (Cook 1914–40, 2: 283; Lane 1980; *CCIS* passim). However, these two elements alone do not suffice to attribute the monument to the Sabazios cult. The epithets of *Theos bronton epekoos* are reminiscent of Zeus *Brontaios Hypsistos* or *epekoos* (Latyshev 1922: 89), who was worshipped in Phrygia (*MAMA*: pp. XXXVIII–XLIV; Cook 1914–40, 2: 833–836), Sabazios' native country (Milchev 1977: 75; Johnson 1984), where Sabazios himself was usually equated with Zeus (Cook 1914–40, 1: 390). Altars of Zeus *Bronton* were decorated with his own representations and eagles, as well as Dionysiac emblems, such as the plow and the vine (Cook 1914–40, 2: 836). Anonymous *Theos epekoos bronton* was offered a dedication in Rome (*IG* XIV 983; Latyshev 1922: 89), where Jupiter *Sanctus Bronton* was also revered and offered a relief with a dedication (Cook 1914–40, 2: 838, fig. 795). In Thrace, Zeus Sabazios was indeed portrayed with thunderbolts, but not called *bronton*; he was invoked there as "heedful," yet this epithet was applied to too many gods (Weinreich 1912) to be indicative of its bearer's identity.[25]

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[22] The meaning of this word is not entirely clear (comm. to *CIRB* 942, with discussion). There are several suggestions: unit close to Rhodian *patra*; class of first settlers as opposed to the newcomers; civic community. The latter interpretation is the most probable.

[23] Κοιτειτῶν is a variant of Κυτειτῶν; for the variant in the spelling of the name of this Bosporan town, see comm. to *CIRB* 942.

[24] For a commentary on the name see Latyshev 1922: 90.

The Bosporan *Theos bronton epekoos* is anonymous. Thracian and Dacian anonymous gods, as argued above, do not appear to have been affiliated with Sabazios; in contrast to them, the latter retained his name. But notwithstanding the anonymity of *Theos bronton epekoos* distinguishing between Sabazios and the Bosporan Thundering God, the two were perhaps akin.

The inscription on the cult table from Cytaeum contains neither the words *Theos Hypsistos*, nor the list of magistrates characteristic of the collegia of this god; it was not left by a synod or a thiasos. The equation of *Theos bronton epekoos* and *Theos Hypsistos epekoos*, assumed by Latyshev (1922: 90), is a statement that demands proof, and although likely, may not be taken for granted. So far, this evidence is lacking. Thus, even if the *patris* of Cytaeans worshipped Sabazios in the disguise of *Theos bronton epekoos*, this does not imply that *Theos Hypsistos* of the Bosporus was associated with Sabazios.

Finally, Salač (1955: 222) supposes that since a horseman is portrayed on the stele of the thiasotes celebrating the Day of Tanais (fig. 25), the Thracian hero played a considerable role in the emergence of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult on the Bosporus. In his opinion, the rhyton in the hand of the god on the Tanais stele indicates links with wine drinking and hence with Sabazios. But the rhyton was a sacred object of the Iranians; it appears in numerous cultic scenes as a symbol of a sanctified union, and not necessarily of ecstasy or related notions (above, 1.2.3.5–6). As to the depiction of a horseman, this motif occurs frequently enough in local Scytho-Sarmatian art, and need not be connected with Thrace.

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[25] Not only Zeus and Sabazios, but other gods as well were described as "thunderers" and portrayed with thunderbolts. To cite an example from a neighboring area: Aramazd (Ahura Mazda) in Armenia was worshipped as Aramazd the Thunderer and depicted on coins with thunderbolts (Russel 1987: 171).

2.3.5 *Conclusions*

There is no unequivocal evidence on the association between Yahweh and Sabazios in the Graeco-Roman world. The cult of Sabazios was indeed very popular in Thrace. The Thracian royal dynasty, related to the Bosporan royal house, worshipped the local *Theos Hypsistos*. There might be some connection between the Bosporan *Theos bronton epekoos* and *Theos Hypsistos*. All these reasons are sufficient to assume a possibility of some influence of Sabazios on the Most High God of the Bosporus, but they alone do not prove that such influence existed.[26]

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[26] Two artifacts discovered in Panticapaeum resemble the sculpture of the eagle carrying a god's bust from Serdica. A lamp, featuring on its disc a bearded male bust carried by an eagle, was unearthed from a first-century AD child's grave (Kobylina 1978: fig. on p. 156). A bust of a bearded god, flanked by a star and a crescent, is depicted above an eagle on a second-century intaglio (Neverov 1978: fig. on p. 188). Both Kobylina and Neverov cite Egyptian parallels to these objects, and identify the god as Zeus-Ammon (?; Kobylina 1978: 133) and Sarapis (Neverov 1978: 170). These two artifacts, most likely imported, may attest to the Egyptian beliefs of the Bosporans rather than allude to cultic connections with Serdica. They are insufficient to establish these connections with any degree of certainty.

For depictions of gods or deified emperors carried by eagles see Cook 1914–40, 2: 102–103, with extensive bibliography and illustrations. The lamp reproduced by Cook (fig. 64) is almost identical to that from Panticapaeum.

A lamp featuring a bust carried by an eagle, a god holding thunderbolts and a scepter depicted on its handle (cf. Cook 1914–40, 2: fig. 652), is classified as portraying Sarapis in *LIMC* (Clerc and Leclant 1994: No. 101b).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MOST HIGH GOD OF THE BOSPORUS AND IRANIAN TRADITION

The hypothesis connecting the Most High God of the Bosporus with an Iranian background rests on three main arguments. Tanais, which has produced the bulk of *Theos Hypsistos* documents of the Bosporus, was essentially a semi-barbaric city, with a growing proportion of Iranians in its population as well as in the membership of its collegia. Further, the image of the horseman on the stele of thiasotes celebrating the Day of Tanais appears to belong to the indigenous tradition of representing a god as a cavalier. Finally, the hierarchy of the associations worshipping *Theos Hypsistos* seems to have been related to the Iranian tradition of warrior societies.

2.4.1 *Tanais: Some Ethnic and Cultural Characteristics*

Tanais[1] was the least hellenized of the Bosporan cities. It was founded by the Bosporans in the third century BC in the northeastern corner of the kingdom as a trading station, linking the Scytho-Maeoto-Sarmatian population of the Don area to large Black Sea ports (Strabo 7.4.5; 11.2.3). This emporium, surrounded by vast steppes and located far away not only from great Mediterranean cultural centers, but even from the Greek nucleus of the Bosporan Kingdom, was the northernmost settlement of the classical world at that time (Shelov 1970: 9; 26–45; Arsen'yeva, Böttger, and Vinogradov 1996: 54).

Local traditions are responsible for numerous non-Greek features of Tanais. Construction techniques were extremely primitive: even defensive walls were built almost without foundations, and roof tiles were ignored and evidently superseded by thatched roofs, typical of indigenous settlements (Shelov 1961a: 114–115). Handmade and glossy pottery of local forms constitute about half the total pottery finds (Shelov 1961a: 116–117). Local jewelry, mirrors, and other objects (Shelov 1961a: 118), as well as Sarmatian brands incised on various household objects and on slabs with Greek inscriptions (*CIRB* 1237; 1241; 1243; 1248; 1249; 1250; Solomonik 1959: Nos. 1; 12–14; 38; Shelov 1961a: 113, 116) remain characteristic of the Tanais city site through its history (Shelov 1970; 1972, passim).

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[1] For the site and the history of its excavations see in Russian: Knipovich 1949; Shelov 1970; 1972; in Western languages: Arsen'eva and Šelov 1988; Böttger 1995; 1996.

The semi-barbaric character of the town is best expressed in the division of its population into two categories, Ἕλληνες καὶ Ταναεῖται (*CIRB* 1243), each group headed by its own authorities: ἑλληνάρχος (*CIRB* 1242, 1237, 1247, 1248, 1251a) on the one hand, and ἄρχων Ταναειτῶν (*CIRB* 1237, 1242, 1245, 1251) and λόχαγος Ταναειτῶν (*CIRB* 1251a) on the other hand (Minns 1913: 615; Knipovoch 1949: 97–102; Gaydukevich 1949: 343–344; Boltunova 1964: 197; Shelov 1970: 213–217; 1972: 264–266).[2] This division, attested by the second–third-century AD inscriptions, is reflected in the archaeological evidence from the second–first centuries BC,[3] showing a clear boundary between the hellenized and the barbaric quarters of the town (Shelov 1970: 215; 1989: 52). However, even during this earlier period the Greek and indigenous cultural elements mutually influenced each other, which is demonstrated by the materials from the early necropolis of Tanais (Shelov 1970: 82–106) and from the town itself (Shelov 1970: 107–152).

This picture changed drastically in the first century AD, as a result of two major events: the crushing defeat of Tanais by Polemo (Strabo 11.2.3) on the turn of the Christian era (Salač 1955: 231–217; Boltunova 1964: 198; Shelov 1970: 226; 1972: 268; Böttger 1996: 42) and the mass influx of Sarmatians into the town's population (Shelov 1970: 216; 1972: 238; Kostenko 1983: 80–81). To be sure, Sarmatian ethnic elements began to play an ever growing role in other Bosporan cities, as well (above, 0.2), but it was in Tanais where the changes were most profound.

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[2] This division is not always interpreted as purely ethnic (Ziebarth 1896: 27; Minns 1913: 615; Kolobova 1933b: 71; Knipovoch 1949: 98; Gaydukevich 1949: 343–344). Zhebelyov (1934: 43), as well as Ziebart in his later work (1929: 140), is inclined to consider all the inhabitants of Tanais as Ἕλληνες, and all the traders as Ταναεῖται.

[3] For a different approach see Dan'shin (1989), who suggests that the division into *Hellenes* and *Tanaitai* started in the mid-second century AD, owing to an incorporation of a new Sarmatian-Alanian group.

After the destruction, the "barbaric" part was never rebuilt, and Ἕλληνες and Ταναεῖται mingled in the restored town (Shelov 1970: 215; 1989: 52). Although the formal division was still valid, as the inscriptions cited above testify, it was deprived of cultural and probably even social significance (Shelov 1972: 266; 1989: 51). *Hellenarchai* bear such names as Ῥόδων Φαζινάμου and Ψυχαρίων Φιδάνοι (*CIRB* 1242, AD 188; 1251, AD 236); these are only two of numerous examples of persons having Greek names and barbaric patronymics, or vice versa, showing that many families (or maybe even their majority) were of mixed origin (Shelov 1972: 246).

According to Shelov (1972: 242–244), of 938 known names and patronymics of the approximately[4] 575 persons who lived in Tanais in the second–third centuries AD (471 name and 467 patronymics),[5] 55.2% are Greek ones, 4% are Roman, and 40.8% are barbaric, while among the latter, about 80%, i.e., 32% of the total population, are of Iranian origin.[6] With the transition from the second to the third century AD, the relative quantity of Greek and Roman names further decreases and that of Iranian names grows considerably: while in the second century AD 72% of *Tanaitai* bore Greek and Roman names, and only 19% Iranian ones, in the third century 52% of names were Greek and Roman, and 39% Iranian (Shelov 1972: 247).

Almost 150 years of excavations of the city site and necropoleis of Tanais have revealed abundant material concerning its ethnic and social history (Knipovich 1949; Shelov 1970; 1972; Arsen'eva and Šelov 1988; Böttger 1995; Arsen'yeva, Böttger, and Vinogradov 1996). The ethnically mixed character of the population of the town is reflected in the anthropological features of buried *Tanaitai* (Gerasimova 1971). The inhabitants of Tanais laid their deceased to rest in compliance with several traditions: Greek, Maeotian, Scythian, and Sarmatian (Shelov 1972: 232–238). Beginning from the first century AD, and especially from the second century, Sarmatian influence made itself more and more evident in the funeral rites, obviously indicating the growing proportion of Sarmatians in the population (Shelov 1961b: 94; 1970: 238). Materials from the city site reflect the same process: in the course of the first centuries AD, the Sarmatization of various groups of artifacts (pottery, metalwork) and the overall barbarization of the life style only increased (Shelov 1972: 240).

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[4] It is sometimes impossible to determine whether two bearers of identical names and patronymics living at about the same time are different persons.

[5] Patronymics are certainly less reliable as a source for Tanais prosopography, for fathers of *Tanaitai* might have not been citizens of Tanais. In the quantitative estimates, the name of a father of several sons may be registered as belonging to several men (Shelov 1972: 244). However, taking into account the relatively large total number of names, one may safely ignore the possibility of minor faults.

[6] The ethnic attribution of names in Shelov's book is based on the works of Zgusta (1955; 1964). Since the affiliation of a considerable portion of the names is problematic, the figures are approximate.

Tanais inscriptions are rendered in Greek, but the quantity of grammar and spelling mistakes is shocking even when compared with late inscriptions from other Bosporan cities. Certain grammatical irregularities are found too often to be accidental: they are likely to have resulted from the influence of another language (Knipovich 1949: 118–119) or even from the use of Greek by non-Greek speakers (Kolobova 1933a: 418–419).[7] Hence it seems very plausible that Greek served as the language of official proceedings and writing, while Sarmatian was used at least by a considerable part of population in daily life (Kolobova 1933a: 418; Shelov 1972: 255).

As to the religious notions of the *Tanaitai*, archaeological data from the necropoleis of Tanais, which resemble barbaric burials rather than other Bosporan city cemeteries (Knipovich 1949: 47–49; Shelov 1961b: 83; 93), indicate that indigenous beliefs remained fully alive. They account for weapons stuck into graves (Knipovich 1949: 48),[8] burial constructions shaped as circular stone fences (Shelov 1961b: 87; 1972: 233), horse harnesses in pit graves and horse burials in tumuli (Kazakova and Kamenetzkiy 1974, 2: 144), and pieces of chalk and realgar in the inventories of many graves (Shelov 1961b: 93). The interment of horses,[9] as well as of chalk and realgar pieces, most probably symbols of fire (Smirnov K. F. 1964: 94, 251; 1975b:

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[7] Kolobova (1933; 1935), in her papers on the Sarmatian language (regrettably blurred by the author's adherence to Marr's ideas, dominating Soviet linguistics in the 1930's) suggests some very interesting ideas about the possible Sarmatian influence on the grammar of the Tanais inscriptions. Shelov (1972: 255) is fully justified in rejecting Tolstoy's (1954) attempt to explain the irregularity in the genitive form of some names as a preservation of an archaic Greek relict form in the provincial town of Tanais.

[8] For the Scythian cult of arms and interment of arms in burials see Bessonova 1984.

[9] Massagetae, according to Herodotus (1.212), worshipped the Sun as their only god, to whom they sacrificed horses. Pausanias (3.20.4) reports Persians sacrificed horses to the Sun.

For the horse as an Indo-European solar symbol see Litvinskiy 1968: 33–37; Campbell 1968: 191; 237–239; and Kuz'mina 1977.

156; *SSSV* 165, 178–179), demonstrates that the *Tanaitai* of Scythian and Sarmatian origin remained faithful to their ancestral traditions, solar and fire cults playing an extremely important role in the beliefs of these Iranian tribes (Smirnov K. F. 1975b; *SSSV* 210–211).[10] On the other hand, the absence of inscribed tombstones—thus far only one (*CIRB* 1299) has been discovered—and the extreme rarity of articles from the typical Graeco-Roman funeral inventory show how superficial the hellenization of Tanais was (Knipovich 1949: 47).

Not a single temple or shrine of a Greek god or hero has yet been uncovered at this rather well-investigated city site. Two complexes that may be defined as cultic are cellars where apparently non-Greek rites took place. One of them, where clay stamp seals were discovered, is described above (1.3.2.8). The second had been filled up with fragments of raw brick and pottery before the final destruction of Tanais in the mid-fourth century AD. Eighteen rams were buried in the filling of this cellar (Shelov 1972: 289; Arsen'yeva and Shelov 1974: 147–150); a single ram burial was discovered in another Tanais cellar (Arsen'yeva 1972). These interments were evidently ritual; similar burials of rams were discovered at other indigenous sites, notably in Neapolis Scythica, where bones of five rams were unearthed, together with fragments of cult vessels and figurines, in a building which probably served for cult purposes (Vysotskaya 1976: 60).[11] In the debris in the Tanais cellar with the eighteen ram burials a terracotta figurine of an eagle was discovered (Shelov 1972: 291; Arsen'yeva and Shelov 1974: 148).[12] It is certainly very tempting to compare this eagle with eagles decorating stelae of thiasotes; however, eagles were associated with too many celestial gods for this find to be attributed unequivocally.

Finds of terracottas are extremely rare in Tanais. The majority of figurines that have been discovered, mostly in fragments, portrays a seated goddess, presumably Aphrodite (1.3.2.6). There are also a few figurines with pendular limbs (Shelov 1972: 291–292).[13]

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[10] Clement of Alexandria (*Protrept.* 5.56) cites Nymphodorus, who reports Sarmatians worshipped fire (τὸ πῦρ σέβειν ἱστορεῖ).

[11] The ram played an important role in Iranian beliefs. Depictions of rams are predominant on zoomorphic handles of Sarmatian vessels (Skalon 1941: 173–184; *SSSV* pls. 46: 2, 3; 78: 2, 3, 17; cf. pl. 75: 36). Litvinskiy (1968: 59–74) demonstrates the association of the ram with the concept of *pharn* in the religious concepts of modern Central Asian peoples and Ossetians, as well as ancient Sarmatians. The ram symbolized the *xvarenah* in Sasanian Iran (Lukonin 1969: 97).

[12] Similar locally produced terracottas were found at two other Bosporan sites (*TSP* 1–2: 20). A terracotta figurine of an eagle was discovered in a cellar in Olbia (*TSP* 1–2: pl. 37: 4).

In the preserved inscriptions Greek gods occur only seldomly (*CIRB* 1237, 1239, 1315).[14] *CIRB* 1237, a dedication to Zeus, Ares, and Aphrodite, and *CIRB* 1315, a bizarre dedication to Artemis, have been discussed above (1.3.1.2). *CIRB* 1239 is a dedication to Apollo. It is important that two stelae out of three (*CIRB* 1237 and 1239) were ordered by royal legates (Knipovich 1949: 114), showing that among the *Tanaitai* themselves the drive to offer inscribed dedications to gods bearing Greek names was almost nonexistent. On the other hand, a considerable number of typically Sarmatian portable incense-burners and clay stamp seals (plate 21: 3; Shelov 1965) discovered at the city site were used in the rites of local origin. Only *Theos Hypsistos* and Aphrodite *Ourania* enjoyed in Tanais a cult that may be regarded as established (above, 1.3.2.3).

In summary, Tanais was a city with a mixed Graeco-barbarian population. The degree of its hellenization only diminished with the transition from the first to the second and third centuries, while the Scytho-Sarmatian strand prevailed. Ignoring this in a study of Tanais cults will inevitably lead to major errors. In fact, a surprisingly considerable number of scholars have failed to appreciate the peculiarity of Tanais, and regarded it simply as another Greek provincial town, only because its inscriptions were rendered in pidgin Greek. As a result, they have misunderstood the nature of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult in Tanais.

The almost total membership of Tanais male citizens in the synods of *Theos Hypsistos* (above, 2.1.1.1) implies that the thiasotes created the city and its necropoleis, as we know them today. Thiasotes, who lived their lives and buried their dead in the local way, could worship only a local deity, perhaps slightly hellenized, but still retaining his nature of their ancestors' god. Therefore, *Theos Hypsistos* worshipped by the Tanais thiasotes must have been a deity of local origin.

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[13] For this group of Bosporan terracottas see above, 1.3.2.6.

[14] Recent excavations in Tanais revealed several dozens epigraphical fragments; Apollo is probably mentioned in one of them, and Aphrodite of Apaturum in another. This material is treated in a preliminary publication only (Arsen'yeva, Böttger, and Vinogradov 1996: 66).

2.4.2 *Iconographic Evidence*

2.4.2.1 *The Divine Horseman on the Bosporus in the First Centuries AD*

The profound affinity of the cult of *Theos Hypsistos* with the religious concepts of the Iranian peoples became more apparent with the publication of the stele of thiasotes celebrating the day of Tanais. It features a horseman with a rhyton in his hand facing a blazing altar, and a tree behind it (plate 25; above, 2.1.1.3). Scenes of communion of a horseman, usually holding a rhyton, with a great goddess, are pictured on a number of Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian objects of art, beginning from the fourth century BC: e.g., the Merdzhany rhyton (plate 11), reliefs from the Trekhbratniy tumulus (plate 10: 2), and from the site of Chayka (plate 10: 1; above, 1.2.3.5).

In Bosporan art of the first centuries AD the goddess, most likely identified with Aphrodite *Ourania*, was sometimes portrayed with arboreal-shaped limbs or head: her palms are in the form of huge leafs on the Panticapaeum stele (plate 15: 2). On the Iluratum stamp (plate 22) the goddess' head is depicted as a top of a tree, while her hands are branch-shaped. The isofunctionality of the Goddess and the Tree of Life is conspicuous in the Sarmatian materials. On the magnificent diadem from the Khokhlach tumulus (plate 23) a tree, flanked by deer and other animals, rises directly above the goddess' head, while a gold appliqué ornament of a headgear from one of the Sarmatian Kobyakovo tumuli, situated in the same area, shows a congruent composition: a twelve-branched tree flanked by three pairs of deer[15] and two pairs of birds of prey, under the starry sky (Prokhorova 1994: fig. 1).[16] Thus, the amalgamation of the images of the great goddess of the Bosporus and of the *ficus mundi* is attested iconographically.[17]

The Tanais relief, picturing the mounted god facing a tree, may be interpreted as representing a communion of the god with a goddess, replaced by the tree. The blazing altar sanctifies this ceremony. The relief on the stele of thiasotes celebrating the Day of Tanais belongs therefore to the series of scenes showing the communion between the goddess, identified as Aphrodite *Ourania*, and a god. To be sure, Aphrodite was much revered in Tanais and its vicinity (above, 1.3.2.3).

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[15] For the solar symbolism of deer see Kuz'mina 1984: 99–100.

[16] On a gold buckle from the Siberian collection of Scythian art (above, 1.2.3.5) the goddess' hair is interwoven with branches of a tree.

[17] In fact, for many Indo-European peoples the Tree of Life was a symbol of the universe and an attribute of a great goddess, who often merged with it and whose image was sometimes substituted by that of a tree (1.3.2.4; 1.3.2.8; Ivanov 1974: 75–90; Kuz'mina 1977a: 102; Shaub 1987a: 150–169).

The closest parallel to the Tanais relief is a plaque showing the same scene, i.e., a horseman facing a tree, with an altar blazing between them. The plaque belongs to a gold wreath interred in a royal burial near Panticapaeum (plate 26), where a woman from the family of Rhescouporis II (AD 210/1–226/7) was buried (Ivanova 1953: 177–179, figs. 74–76).

Further, the stele of Agathous (plate 14; *CIRB* 1000), discussed above (1.3.2.2), pictures in its upper register the funeral feast of Agathous, perhaps in the presence of Aphrodite *Ourania*, and in its lower register a meeting of two horseman, one of them apparently Agathous himself, and the other either his deified relative or a god. Notable is a round object, which might be the severed head of an enemy, under the hooves of one of the horses.

Depictions of single horsemen became extremely popular in the Bosporan art of the first centuries AD. It is suggested that Bosporan kings were sometimes portrayed as equestrians on their coins (Rostovtzev 1913: 26; 1927: 143; Blavatskiy 1964a: 187; Pruglo 1972: 180). In fact, the king on horseback is depicted on the obverse of some coins issued by Sauromates II (Frolova 1979: pls. 34: 36–41; 35: 1). However, horsemen are represented usually on the reverse of Bosporan coins. A galloping cavalier, holding a spear in his hand, appears on the reverse of the coins (plate 12.2) of Rhescouporis I (AD 68/9–91/2), Sauromates I (AD 93/4–123/4) and Cotys II (AD 123/4–132/3, Frolova 1979: pls. 4: 10–14; 14: 3; 16: 24–28; 18: 5; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 385, 468, 488, 491, 498, 501). In the mid-second century AD the pattern changed, and the horseman was normally shown mounted on a standing horse, his hand raised, with a six-rayed star usually appearing either near his head, or beneath the exergue line (plate 12.6).[18] This type is common in the coinage of Eupator (AD 154/5–173/4?, Frolova 1979: p. 28: 25–29), Sauromates II (AD 173/4–210/1, Frolova 1979: pls. 35: 24–27; 36; 37: 1–8; 42: 17–24; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 603, 603a, 621), Rhescouporis II[19] (AD

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[18] In the latter case the sign serves as a denarius symbol.

[19] On some of his coins the horseman is depicted holding a scepter (Frolova 1979: pl. 51: 8–18).

210/1–226/7, Frolova 1979: pls. 50: 20–33; 51; 52: 1–26; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 645–646), and Ininthimaeus (AD 234/5–239/40, Frolova 1979: pl. 61: 6–9; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 682, 689). Some coins of Rhescouporis II (Frolova 1979: pl. 52: 25, 26; Anokhin 1989: No. 647) show a cavalier's horse trampling down an enemy (plate 12.7). Personages depicted on the reverse of Bosporan coins were usually either gods or Roman emperors; Sauromates II, Rhescouporis II, and Ininthimaeus struck coins featuring the divine patrons of the dynasty, Aphrodite *Ourania*, Heracles, and Poseidon, on the reverse. Since the equestrian god or gods were much revered on the Bosporus, it seems plausible that the horseman pictured on the Bosporan coins was conceived either as a god or as a king identified with a god.[20]

In Panticapaeum there possibly was an equestrian statue, presumably portraying the king himself (Blavatskiy 1964a: 186); such a statue, crowning a city gate, is represented on the reverse of a coin of Rhescouporis I (plate 12.5; Zograf 1951: pl. 47: 3; Anokhin 1989: No. 381). A statue of a horseman is pictured on a Panticapaeum tombstone (*CIRB* 383; Ivanova 1961: fig. 67). Terracotta figurines of horsemen became common during the first century BC–first century AD (Pruglo 1972), and they prevailed in the second–third centuries AD, especially in rural settlements (Kobylina 1961: 168–169, pl. 37: 4; Kruglikova 1970: 8–9). In Panticapaeum the deceased were portrayed as horsemen on murals of their vaults (1.3.2.7) and on their tombstones (*KW* passim). This predilection for images of mounted warriors may have referred to the growing importance of an equestrian god (Blawatsky and Kochelenko 1966: 8–9), as well as the introduction of new military tactics, based on Sarmatian cavalry techniques (Desyatchkov 1972; Goroncharovskiy and Nikonorov 1987; Goroncharovskiy 1993). In the first centuries AD the depiction of horsemen became a predominant motif in Late Scythian (Shul'tz 1971: 142) and Sarmatian (Treister 1994) art. The influx of Scythians and Sarmatians, that is, the Sarmatization of Bosporan cities, is perhaps the basic factor which brought about a re-orientation both in religion and in iconography.

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[20] Sauromates II and Rhescouporis II were portrayed on some coins with the attributes of both Heracles and Poseidon (above, 0.2).

2.4.2.2 *The God Portrayed on the Karagodeouashkh Rhyton*

A most interesting representation of a mounted god is preserved on one of the silver rhyta, discovered in the Karagodeouashkh tumulus (Mal'mberg and Lappo-Danilevskiy 1894: 140), in Maeotian territory. The large rhyton (plate 27), dated to late fourth–early third century BC (Rostovtzev 1913: 2; Blavatskiy 1974: 38; Y. A. Vinogradov 1993: 70), pictures two horsemen facing one another, their horses trampling down two prostrate bodies.[21] Both horseman, bearded mature men, wear trousers. One of them holds a rhyton in his right hand and a scepter[22] in his left. The other horseman raises his right hand in a gesture of salutation. As Rostovtzev (1913) has convincingly demonstrated, the scene represents the investiture of a victorious king by a god, who is distinguished by his rhyton and scepter.[23] This definition is adopted by Widengren (1965: 172), Gaydukevich (1949:

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[21] They are decapitated. For heads of enemies severed by Scythians and Sarmatians see above, 1.2.3.1.

[22] Thus Rostovtzev (1913: 3) and Blavatskiy (1974: 38). Blawatskiy and Koshelenko (Blawatsky and Kochelenko 1966: 7), Artamonov (1961: 73), and Y. A. Vinogradov (1993: 69) identify this object as a long spear.

[23] Levinskaya and Zuyev in their commentary on Rostovtzev's approach to the Karagodeouashkh scene (1990b: 198–199) attempt to discredit his interpretation as an utterance of the divine legitimation of royal power, claiming that it is based on Rostovtzev's views on the Russian monarchy. The assumption that Rostovtzev's scientific views were affected by his political sympathies is a completely ungrounded offense to the scholar's integrity. For the sake of historical accuracy it should be mentioned that since 1905 Rostovtzev belonged to the Party of Constitutional Democrats (Frolov 1990: 150, 160), which was far from ascribing divine provenance to royal power.

Their own suggestion, that the scene on the Karagodeouashkh rhyton shows an adoration of a military leader by his subordinate, is absolutely unreasonable and has already been criticized and rejected by Y. A. Vinogradov (1993: 69).

Y. A. Vinogradov (1993: 69–70) regards the scene as cultic, but interprets it as a meeting between a king (and not a god) holding the rhyton and a warrior greeting him. The rhyton in Vinogradov's opinion indicates that the king is on his way to a ceremony of a sacred marriage with a goddess (cf. the rhyton held by a horseman represented on the Merdzhany rhyton, plate 11). This marriage, argues Y. A. Vinogradov, is pictured on the headgear of her priestess, buried in the next chamber (plate 9, above, 1.2.3.6): the central plate of this headgear shows a goddess flanked by two youths, one of them holding a rhyton.

Vinogradov's suggestion is to be rejected not only because the Rostovtzev's argumentation is quite convincing, but first and foremost because characters with rhyta depicted on the Karagodeouashkh plate and rhyton are distinct: the plate portrays a beardless youth, while the rhyton shows a mature bearded man. Moreover, the Karagodeouashkh plate, representing a goddess seated between two men, differs from the other objects of art, showing a goddess facing one man. Vinogradov's conception leaves no space for the second man, placed near the goddess.

130), Blavatskiy and Koshelenko (Kochelenko and Blawatsky 1966: 6–7; Blavatskiy 1974: 39), and Bessonova (1983: 116).

Rostovtzev based his interpretation of the scene on its comparison with later (third century AD) Sasanian rock reliefs, at Naqsh-i-Rustam and Bishapur (Rostovtzev 1913: figs. 1–2; Ghirshman 1962: figs. 168, 211), depicting respectively the investitures of Ardashir I and Bahran I by Ahura Mazda.[24] The rulers and the god are shown there as horsemen, the god handing a wreath, which symbolizes royal power, to the king. Rostovtzev (1913: 5) relates the scenes on the Karagodeouashkh rhyton and the Sasanian reliefs, separated as they are by a gap of about six hundred years,[25] to the ancient notion of divine provenance of royal power, preserved in the beliefs of various Iranian peoples. In his opinion, the rhyton in the god's hand symbolizes a mystic communion of a mortal with a deity, reminiscent of the scenes of communion with the goddess.

This interpretation of the Karagodeuashkh rhyton enables a reconsideration of the significance of the already mentioned gold plaque (plate 26), belonging to a wreath from the burial of a female relative of Rhescouporis II. A mate to this wreath was unearthed in an extremely sumptuous, obviously also royal, burial of a man, dated to the same reign and attributed therefore to the same family (Gaydukevich 1949: 421–423). This wreath (Rostovtzev 1913: pl. 5: 2; Kochelenko and Blawatsky 1966: fig. 4) is almost identical to the first one in design and decoration. Its central plaque also shows a horseman, but behind him is Nike, crowning him with a wreath. Rostovtzev (1913: 25) suggests that the two plaques depict the same subject as that represented on the Karagodeouashkh rhyton: a victorious king (the horseman crowned by Nike) and the god with a rhyton in his hand.

The affinity of the patterns of the Karagodeouashkh scene and of the Agathous' tombstone is visible. The pair of plaques from the royal burial and the Agothous' stele testify to an iconographic and presumably religious continuity between the Sindo-Maeotian and the Bosporan concepts of the divine horseman. If so, the concepts revealed in the Karagodeouashkh scene still existed in the third century AD, and the Sasanian reliefs find a parallel in late Bosporan art.

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[24] Two divine horsemen, portrayed on some Sasanian seals (Rostovtzev 1913: pl. 1: 3–4), whose horses trample down prostrate enemies, are interpreted by Rostovtzev (1913: 31) as Ahura-Mazda and Mithra.

[25] This gap is however filled by Rostovtzev in his later article (1927), where he treats Bactrian and Kushan monuments, featuring mounted kings in the attitude of adoration.

Ghirshman (1962: 133) suggests a Scythian provenance for Sasanian investiture scenes. For Parthian culture as a possible intermediary between Scythian and Sasanian art see Rayevskiy 1977a.

Before the turn of the era, two major types of equestrian scenes were represented on objects from indigenous sites in South Russia: a mounted god facing a goddess (later sometimes superseded by a tree)[26] and a mounted god facing a king. In both the god is normally portrayed with the same attribute, a rhyton in his hand. If Rostovtzev's interpretation of the two plaques from the royal burials is correct, the god endowing the king with power is represented in front of a tree. The god on the gold plaques from the royal burials possesses, therefore, characteristics of both patterns. Thus, iconography taken alone does not suggest that the two types imply different gods. However, rhyta occur rather frequently in various cultic scenes, and the fact that the god is mounted is, by itself, a vague indication of his nature.[27] Although it appears probable that the same god is represented in the scenes of communion with the goddess and in the investiture scenes, one cannot press this suggestion too hard.

As argued above, the horseman in the scenes showing him facing a goddess, apparently the local Aphrodite *Ourania*, is most likely the god known as the Scythian Heracles-Targitaos, or a mortal nobleman posthumously identified with this deity. In contrast to his Greek counterpart, Scythian Heracles reveals no features characteristic of a demigod (1.2.2). Moreover, in some versions of the Scythian ethnogenic legend Heracles is replaced by Zeus or Jupiter, which supposes an affiliation or confusion between these deities either in Scythian myths or in their Greek adaptations.

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[26] A fourth-century BC gold open-work plate from Gyunovka (in the middle Dnieper flow) shows a horseman holding a bow, a quiver attached to his belt. He hunts a deer, a tree between them (Bessonova 1983: fig. 34; *SSSV* color plate facing p. 160). The tree, which was accentuated with a red filling, appears to be a *ficus mundi* (Bessonova 1983: 117). The horseman, with his bow and quiver, ascribed by tradition to the Scythian Heracles (above, 1.2.2), is perhaps this god, shown in front of the tree, as in several other scenes. Other identifications however cannot be eliminated. The aspect of the equestrian hunt, which distinguishes the Gyunovka plate, is rare in Scythian art. A horseman with a dart in his hand, ready to strike a blow, on a pendant from Kul'-Oba (*SSSV* pl. 34: 4), is not necessarily a god.

[27] In contrast to South Russia, Thrace has fortunately produced not only iconographic, but also epigraphic evidence, which testifies that several deities, including Apollo, Sabazios, Asclepius, and anonymous and named heroes (*CCET* passim), were represented mounted. True, their iconography is split into many more than two main types, but there is no clear association between concrete gods and certain iconographic types.

Opinions on the identity of the Karagodeouashkh god differ. Rostovtzev (1913: 5) identifies him as Papaios, the Scythian counterpart of Ahura-Mazda. Gaydukevich (1949: 130) and Artamonov (1961: 74) also define him as Papaios, while for El'nitzkiy (1960: 48) he is Thagimasades, and for Rayevskiy (1977b: 61) Targitaos, the Scythian Heracles. Koshelenko and Blavatskiy (Kochelenko and Blawatsky 1966: 6–7; Blavatskiy 1974: 39) affiliate this god with Mithra. Bessonova (1983: 116) tends to identify him as Apollo-Goitosyros, corresponding to Mithra.

As to the solar god, be his name Goitosyros, Mithra, or otherwise, he was portrayed before the turn of the era riding a chariot, not mounted (below, 2.4.2.4). Neither the Karagodeouashkh god nor other representations of the rider-god in Scythian art have any demonstrably solar traits.

If the Karagodeouashkh god was a grantor of royal power, as the cited authors suggest, he does not necessarily have to be a supreme cosmic deity as Ahura-Mazda and presumably Papaios were. The iconographic parallel with the Sasanian reliefs by itself does not imply that Sasanian and Sindo-Maeotian gods are the same. Nevertheless, the identification of the Karagodeouashkh god as Papaios is based on the assumption that the nature of the (Scytho)-Sindo-Maeotian deity must be as close as possible to that of Ahura-Mazda. Origenes (*Contra Cels.* 5.46) in fact says that Scythians consider Papaios a supreme god (τὸν Παπαῖον θεὸν εἶναι τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν) and equates Papaios and Zeus *Hypsistos* twice (*Contra Cels.* 5.41; 5.45):

> Οὐδὲν οὖν οἶμαι διαφέρειν Δία Ὕψιστον καλεῖν ἢ Ζῆνα ἢ Ἀδωναῖον ἢ Σαβαώθ ἢ Ἀμοῦν, ὡς Αἰγύπτιοι, ἢ Παπαῖον, ὡς Σκύθαι.
>
> I don't think it makes a difference whether to call Zeus the Most High Zeus or Adonaios or Sabaoth or Amon, as Egyptians do, or Papaios, as Scythians do. (5.41)

There is an additional consideration which renders the identification of the Karagodeouashkh god with Papaios problematic. Herodotus associates Papaios with Zeus (4.59; above, 1.2.1). Ahura-Mazda was compared with Zeus by the Greek authors writing on Persian religion, beginning from Herodotus (1.131), but the image of Greek

Zeus almost does not appear on objects of art from Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian complexes. With one debatable exception,[28] Papaios is also absent from the locally made objects. Would not it be too risky to assume that Papaios made his first appearance as a horseman (or perhaps his unique anthropomorphic appearance) on the Karagodeouashkh rhyton, only to withdraw for six hundred years, before he was portrayed on a royal diadem in Rhescouporis' II reign? On the other hand, Zeus-Papaios appears to be so intimately associated with Heracles-Targitaos that one can imagine his being depicted in the same pattern.

Heracles, both in his Greek and Scythian guises, was a most popular personage, depicted on numerous objects discovered in South Russia (Grakov 1950; Artamonov 1961: 78–81). Heracles' affiliation with Zeus-Papaios is reflected in the variants of the Scythian ethnogenic legend, which ascribe the fatherhood of the Scythians to Heracles and Zeus alternatively (above, 1.2.2). The god's function, suggested by the scene in the main register of the Karagodeouashkh rhyton, belongs rather to Heracles-Targitaos, the first king and the divine ancestor of the Scythians, who may be expected to care for the power and victories of his offspring.[29] Rich floral ornaments in the upper and lowermost registers of the rhyton may allude to the god's association with the vegetation goddess.

In summary, the identity of the Karagodeouashkh god remains unclear. His association with Heracles-Targitaos seems plausible (the name of this god, as well as the names of other Maeotian counterparts of Scythian gods, has not been preserved by the ancient tradition). However, the possibility that he was akin to Zeus-Papaios cannot be ruled out.

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[28] The top of a scepter with numerous jingling bells, presumably a shaman's staff, found in Lysaya Gora, is shaped as an ithyphallic figure, standing in the center of the Tree of Life, and surrounded by birds of prey and canines, dogs or wolves (Artamonov 1961: fig. 19; Bessonova 1983: fig. 2; *SSSV* color plate facing p. 160). A fragment of an identical scepter was found in a tumulus in the same area (Bessonova 1983: 41). Some authors consider this Master of the Universe as Papaios (Artamonov 1961: 75; Bessonova 1983: 43). Rayevskiy (1977b: 44) regards this god as Targitaos-Heracles. In fact, of all Scythian monuments only stone idols (known as *kamennye baby*), holding rhyta and having Scythian short swords attached to their belts, usually feature emphasized phalli (*SSSV* pl. 40), and are therefore interpreted as representing either ancestors, or heroes, perhaps deified and identified with Targitaos (Rayevskiy 1983; 1985: 136–145). These figures possess indeed the most important attributes of Heracles-Targitaos, the forefather of the Scythians (Artamonov 1961: 80). Thus, the Lysaya Gora scepter may feature the Scythian Heracles.

[29] As Rayevskiy (1977b: 58–61) argues, geese, shown in the lower register of the rhyton, immediately beneath the two horsemen, belong to Targitaos: they symbolize the middle world, as opposed to the upper spheres and the chthonic realm. Association of a water bird with the middle world is indeed well-established; its role as an attribute of Targitaos is however questionable (cf. Bessonova 1983: 45).

2.4.2.3 *The Divine Horsemen of Eurasia: Multiple Identifications*

The problem of defining the identity of the rider-god is twofold. The first question is whether we are dealing with one or several deities, who were usually or occasionally represented mounted. This point clarified, one may then inquire into the identity of the mounted god or gods.

The cult of mounted gods was widespread from Germany to China (Rostovtzev 1927; Will 1955: 55–125), where different gods and heroes were represented as horsemen.[30] From his typology of Roman reliefs of horsemen Will (1955: 124) infers that deities appeared mounted not because their nature prescribed that or because their worshippers spent their lives on horseback, but because they performed an action which demanded a horse: fighting evil or hunting, that is, chasing evil forces. The rider-god struggled against world evil; he was defender and savior, the supreme guardian of justice, an ever victorious grantor of victory (cf. Campbell 1968: 243). This implies that various such gods were not necessarily interrelated; they may have emerged independently or in parallel on the basis of similar beliefs, in many cases evidently rooted in the Iranian concept of the divine horseman (Rostovtzev 1927).

The spread of the images of the horse and the horseman and their supplanting of the images of other deities took place in the late first millennium BC and the first centuries AD not only on the Black Sea littoral, but also in Central Asia and Transcaucasia. This process was brought about by the growing popularity of the cults of a solar god, a deified ancestor and the horse, introduced by Iranian nomads in almost every place they arrived (Staviskiy 1979; cf. Rostovtzev 1927). The same phenomenon is conspicuous in India after the appearance of the Saka there (Litvinskiy 1968: 41–43). Worship of a solar equestrian god was obviously one of the basic religious traditions of Iranians.

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[30] The representation and cult of a mounted god cannot be interpreted as part of the common Indo-Iranian heritage of the peoples inhabiting these countries. Both the *Rigveda* and the *Avesta* normally mention carriages (Kuz'mina 1977a: 107; 1977b: 33–34). The appearance of horsemen is due to the spread of cavalry battle techniques, hitherto unknown, by the late second–early first millennium BC. Only then could concepts of equestrian deities emerge.

Thus, the Bosporan horseman should not be automatically connected directly with his Thracian or Danubian counterparts, as Salač (1955) assumes. To be sure, the attributes of Scythian and Sindo-Maeotian divine horsemen differ from those of Thracian and Danubian cavaliers, which usually include a spear and a snake coiling on a tree, but not a rhyton.[31] The same is true about the composition of scenes representing mounted heroes and gods. In Thrace they may picture several protagonists and represent various activities, such as hunting, sacrifice, etc.[32] The provenance of Bosporan worship of a rider-god is to be sought primarily in the firmly established local tradition.

2.4.2.4 *The Mounted God of the Bosporus, Indigenous Solar Gods, and Mithra of Trapezus*

Whatever the identity of the Karagodeouashkh god, hundreds of years separate the construction of the Karagodeouashkh tumulus and the erection of the Tanais stele of thiasotes featuring a mounted god. Although iconographic and religious continuity between the world of the Iranian peoples of the fourth century BC in South Russia and the Bosporan Kingdom is obvious, the concept of the divine horseman must have undergone certain transformations: to be sure, the patroness of Bosporan kings, Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* of the first centuries AD, developed beyond Argimpasa.

The title *Theos Hypsistos* supposes associations with the celestial sphere. Religious conceptions of the Bosporans were in fact saturated with solar beliefs. Not only Aphrodite of the Bosporus was celestial. The star and the crescent, the emblem of the Pontus and its kings (Olshausen 1990: 1888), were introduced by Mithradates and his successors to the Bosporus and appeared on Bosporan coins (e.g., Zograf 1951: 194, pls. 44: 14, 18; 46: 4; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 253, 254, 270; cf. Rostovtzeff 1919c: 90, pls. 4: 7, 9; 6: 2, 4, 7) and locally produced jewelry (Neverov 1968: No. 5). On the coins this symbol often appears near the head of a young man wearing a Phrygian cap, who is identified as either a solar deity or his deified worshipper (Rostovtzeff 1919c: 91, pl. 6: 2). Stars occur on almost all the coins struck on the Bosporus in the first centuries AD (Frolova 1979: passim). A bust of the queen Dynamis, Mithradates' granddaughter, shows her wearing the Persian *tiara orthe*, covered with stars (Rostovtzeff 1919c: pl. 3). Two first century BC–first century AD incense-burners, one of them of local clay, are shaped in the form of a bull's head and feature the star and crescent emblem (Kobylina 1978: 51–52, figs. on pp. 98–99). From Gorgippia originates a small gold plaque, dated to the late first century BC–first century AD, which features a solar deity driving a four-horse chariot, the star and crescent emblem above him (Neverov et al. 1980: No. 140; Saprykin 1983).

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[31] Rhyta occur only occasionally, e.g., *CCET* No. 25.

[32] Whether multiple names and functions of the Thracian hero disguise a nucleus of essentially henotheistic cult of one polyfunctional deity, as Gocheva (1981: 159–160) suggests, is disputable.

A solar god wearing a radiate crown and riding a chariot[33] was in fact depicted on the central plaques of gold wreaths[34] and other objects, unearthed from burials in the Taman peninsula and the Kerch area beginning from the fourth century BC (above, 1.2.3.6; Desyatchikov 1973: 77; Saprykin 1983: 70; Treister 1996: 85), but he is absent in western Scythian lands. However, solar symbols, i.e., Segner's wheel,[35] occur on metal pendants discovered in a number of Scythian tumuli (*SSSV* pl. 36: 13; Kuz'mina 1977: 100). Other solar symbols, such as wheels, radiate crowns, and even a winged horse, are painted on the walls of a vault in Neapolis Scythica (Popova 1987: figs. 2, 4). A solar deity wearing a radiate crown and driving a two-horse chariot (Saprykin 1983: fig. 3), radiate heads (Kostenko 1983: figs. 10: 9, 10, 12), horsemen, Segner's wheel (*SSSV* pl. 67: 53, 60), rosettes, and other solar symbols are represented on phalerae from third–first century BC Sarmatian treasures, discovered in the Lower Don area (Kaposhina 1968: 164; Kostenko 1983: fig. 10). The imposing head of a deity, surrounded with solar rays, decorates a bronze breastplate unearthed at the Elizavetovskoye site (Mantzevich 1980: fig. 14).[36]

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[33] In the *Avesta* (*Mihr Yasht* 136) Mithra appears as a sun god driving a four-horse chariot (Widengren 1965: 173; Merkelbach 1984: 25). Depiction of the solar god as a charioteer may reflect this Indo-European tradition (Cook 1914–40, 1: 333), preserved in a society which had abandoned military tactics based on the use of chariots.

[34] Constant representation of this god on funeral wreaths suggests perhaps a comparison with the horsemen shown on the wreaths from the royal tombs of members of Rhescouporis' family.

[35] Segner's wheel is a swastka-like design: a wheel with four horse heads surrounding it. This symbol preserves the image of the four-horse chariot in compliance with the magical principle *pars pro toto* (Kuz'mina 1984: 99). Segner's wheel is the visual depiction of a poetic image common to the *Rigveda* and the *Avesta*, that of the four-horse chariot with one wheel, the sun (Kuz'mina 1977: 100).

For the solar wheel in Greece see Cook 1914–40, 1: 197–198.

Thus, a solar god, depicted usually as a chariot-rider, was revered by indigenous peoples in the Bosporan area.[37] Mithradates VI Eupator and his successors not only reinforced the cult of the local solar god and fashioned it in compliance with the Pontic tradition, but presumably also raised it to state importance. The style of the Tanais thiasotes inscriptions, it should be remembered, suggests that their cult was officially recognized. The Scythians perhaps called this solar god Apollo-Goitosyros (Her. 4.59),[38] and the Pontic kings identified him with their Mithra: a Greek inscription from Rome (published however among *falsae vel suspectae*) identifies Apollo Oitoscyros (*sic*) with Mithra (*CIG* 6013; *IG* XIV 114*; How and Wells 1928, 1: 325; Widengren 1965: 159).

Notable is the popularity of the Iranian solar god Mithra, depicted as a horseman, on the eastern and southern coasts of the Black Sea, areas with which the Bosporus maintained close connections from the very beginning of its colonization, but especially in the late

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[36] Massagetae who worshipped only the Sun and sacrificed horses to him (Her. 1.216; Strabo 11.8.6) obviously associated the Sun with the horse, giving, as Herodotus explains, the swiftest of mortal things to the swiftest of gods. Sarmatians are believed to be connected with Massagetae more closely than with other Iranian nomads (*SSSV* 211).

Scheftelowitz (1933: 295–297) suggests that the Saka worshipped the Zoroastrian Ahura-Mazda in the guise of their ancestral solar Mithra. This seems scarcely possible, since as Abayev (1956: 52) demonstrates, Zoroastrian ideas were absolutely foreign to the Saka, as well as to other Scythian peoples, who never adopted the new faith.

[37] Cook (1914–40, 1: 333–334) notes that the conception of Helios as horseman was foreign to the Greeks, who like other Indo-Europeans depicted the sun god as charioteer. The notion of a mounted sun-god appears to hail from Asia Minor.

[38] For possible etymologies of the god's name see Widengren 1965: 159. If it was Goitosyros, the interpretation may be **gaitha-sura*, "strong in possessions" (Vasmer 1923: 13); if the god was called Oitosyros (a manuscript version that is probably closer to the Scythian name, as the inscription cited below testifies), Nyberg's (1938: 255) rendering **vaita-sura*, "strong in pastures," appears to Widengren more plausible. Both interpretations infer affiliation of the god's name with epithets of Mithra in the *Mihr Yasht*: "granting wealth of fine horses," "lord of wide pastures." For other etymologies of the word see also El'nitzkiy 1960: 47; Donator, Kallistov, and Shishova 1982: 297.

On Apollo-Goitosyros and his affiliation with Mithra see also Bessonova 1983: 43–44.

Hellenistic-early Roman periods (Strabo 11.2.18; 12.3.29; Rostovtseff 1917/18: 4). In Trapezus mounted Mithra enjoyed an Iranian-style cult on a hilltop above the city (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1897: 8, 11, 63; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 301) and was portrayed as a horseman on the coins struck during the second–third centuries AD (Rostovtzev 1913: 32–33; Kochelenko and Blawatsky 1966: 20; Campbell 1968: 192; Merkelbach 1984: 44; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 301–302; Tsetskhladze 1992: 121).[39] Nilsson (*GGR* 2: 675) even suggests that Mithra was the supreme god of Trapezus. A stamp on a Colchian amphora, discovered in the Hellenistic stratum of the city-site of Pichvnari (south-western Georgia), features a horseman with a six-pointed star and a crescent to his left and a bird to his right (Tsetsekhladze 1992: 117); this celestial horseman is most probably Mithra (Tsetskhladze 1992: 122). Fifth- and fourth-century BC seals with depictions of horsemen originate from other Colchian sites; one of them also features a star (Tsetskhladze 1992: 118). A gold medallion featuring a solar deity with a diadem of sun ray over his head was discovered in the vicinity of Apsarus, also in the southwestern Caucasus (Treister 1996: 81–83, fig. 8).[40]

Iranian beliefs were probably brought to Colchis, and to Trapezus in particular, by Persians who came there with the first settlers from Sinope, the metropolis of Trapezus, which was a part of the Achaemenian Empire (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 302; Tsetskhladze 1992).[41] Boyce and Grenet (1991: 301) are disinclined to connect the cult of Mithra with the religious tradition of the royal dynasty of the Pontus, which established its rule over Colchis only later, under Mithradates Eupator. However, the star and the crescent, the badge of the Pontus and its kings, shown on the Colchian amphora stamp, and appearing on engraved finger-rings discovered in this area (Saprykin 1983: 72) allude to the possibility of an earlier association of the Pontic dynasty with the cult of mounted Mithra.[42] Mithra in fact must have been one of the most venerated gods of the Pontic Kingdom, since its rulers bore the theophoric name of Mithradates (*GGR* 2: 675; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 301),[43] although direct evidence for this cult is rather meager. Some coins of Zela feature Mithra's bust (Olshausen 1990: 1890); some coins of Amastris presumably portray Mithra on the obverse and Aphrodite-Anaitis on the reverse (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 286).

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[39] Boyce and Grenet (1991: 302) indicate that most symbols depicted on these coins, belong to the realm of Mithraic mysteries; however, a mountain cult of Mithra in the city is foreign to Mithraism, and the representations of the god on horseback are rare in the iconography of Mithraea.

[40] The medallion is dated to the second–third centuries AD by Lordkipanidze, its first publisher, and to the third century BC by Treister (1996: 82). It was probably manufactured on the Bosporus, although its eastern Mediterranean provenance cannot be ruled out (Treister 1996: 96).

[41] Olshausen (1990: 1890) dates the beginning of the cult of Mithra in Trapezus to the Imperial period. Materials published by Tsetskhladze (1992) attest to its existence during the Hellenistic period.

Mithra was certainly worshipped in Sinope under Achaemenian rule. In Armenia he was one of the most revered gods (Merkelbach 1984: 46–50; Russel 1987: 261–288). Iranian-style cults of Mithra in the Pontus and in Armenia differ from the Roman cult of Mithra the bull slayer.[44] Noteworthy, evidence of the Mithraic mystery cult in Anatolia is very scarce (Beck 1984: 2019; Russel 1987: 261).[45]

A supreme solar god, defender and fighter against evil, was represented as a horseman in the Iranian world. The Bosporan Kingdom was no exception. The rider-god of the late Bosporus appears as a complex deity, who probably amalgamated features of several gods: the rider-god of the Scythians and Sindo-Maeotians, and the solar god, Apollo-Goitosyros, who was initially worshipped in the area as a chariot-rider, and who may have been associated with Mithra.[46] Whatever the names of his precursors, in the first centuries AD, perhaps under the influence of the Pontic-Colchian cult of mounted

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[42] For the early contacts between the Pontic Kingdom and Colchis, see Shelov 1980: 28.

[43] On the cults of the Pontus see Reinach 1895: 236–243; 285–287; Olshausen 1990; and Boyce and Grenet 1991: 281–304.

[44] Although Mithraism is likely to have originated in Hellenistic Asia Minor, perhaps even in the Pontus and Armenia, where Roman legionaries were exposed to the local cult of Mithra, and may have transmitted some of its aspects to the west (Colpe 1975; Beskow 1978; Russel 1987: 261).

For a discussion of current opinions on the lack of continuity in Mithra worship from East to West see Beck 1984: 2063–2071.

[45] Kochelenko and Blawatsky (1966: 21) however suggest that the cult of Mithra *Tauroctonos*, represented on the Bosporus by three more or less complete first-century AD terracotta figurines and a few fragments, arrived there from the Pontic Kingdom. The iconography of the Bosporan bull-killing god differs significantly from the standard tauroctonos figure (Beck 1984: 2019). In any event, traces of a mystery cult of Mithra on the Bosporus are very sparse, and the Bosporan cult of Mithra or an affiliated solar god was much more traditionally Iranian than was Roman Mithraism. See also Beskow 1978: 14–15.

[46] The exploit of cattle-theft, which appears to be found both in the tradition of the Scythian Heracles and of Mithra (above, 1.2.2), may have been conductive to the association of the two gods.

Mithra, this god was represented only as a horseman and acquired growing significance as a very popular deity and a patron of the royal dynasty, the Most High God of the Bosporus.

2.4.2.5 *Eagles and Other Birds of Prey in Iranian Imagery*

Eagles, which are sculpted on five Tanais stelae of thiasotes, and which are usually cited as evidence of some affiliation of *Theos Hypsistos* with Zeus or Sabazios, do not necessarily belong to these gods (above, 2.1.1.1), and even may not be attributes of a specific deity. Birds of prey depicted alone occur not infrequently on objects of art discovered at indigenous sites in South Russia (e.g., *SSSV* pls. 35: 16; 36: 25; 37: 13; 38: 1, 16, 40, 41; 39: 16, etc.). In Armenia, for instance, images of eagles were used to symbolize *xvarenah*—glory[47] (Russel 1987: 164; 306–311). In the Sasanian and Kushan milieux this basic Iranian notion is also conceived in the image of a bird of prey, most likely a falcon[48] (Gnoli 1989: 150, with references). In the form of this bird (*vareghna*) *xvarenah* appears in the *Avesta* (e.g., *Zamyad Yasht* 35, 36, 38). Wreaths as tokens of (royal) power and victory, handed by gods to kings and military leaders, or interred with defunct kings and chiefs,[49] occur very frequently on Iranian monuments, in South Russia and elsewhere. On a Sogdian fresco from Panjikent two eagles

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In the *Avesta*, Mithra the evil-fighter is not infrequently accompanied by the victorious Verethraghna-Heracles (*Mihr Yasht* 67), the bearer of igneous *xvarenah*. In an address to the nation, the Armenian king Tiridates invokes the aid of the triad Aramazd (Ahura Mazda), Anahit (Anahita), and Vahagn (Verethraghna, the Persian Heracles; Frye 1983: 230; Russel 1987: 195). In Armenia Mithra was sometimes superseded by Vahagn-Heracles (Russel 1987: 192); moreover, the cult of Mithra appears to have been eclipsed by that of Vahagn (Russel 1987: 215).

When mounted on horseback or riding a chariot, Mithra *Invictus* of the Mithraic mysteries seems to possess the power of unconquered Verethraghna (Campbell 1968: 191; 195). For representations of Mithra *ephippos* as Verethraghna (much less common than Mithra *tauroctonos*) see Campbell 1968: 181–196.

[47] For the notion of *xvarenah* see above, 1.2.1.1.

[48] In Sasanian iconography and literature the falcon was also an epiphany of Verethraghna. Schwartz (1985: 672) observes that "here the symbol and concept merge with that of the *Khvarenah*, with which the yazata is, not surprisingly, intimately related." The same amalgamation of concepts and symbols of *xvarenah* and its bearer Heracles-Targitaos may have taken place in South Russia.

[49] In the first centuries AD many Bosporans were buried with gold wreaths on their heads. Central plaques of these wreaths were usually decorated with imprints of coins. The funeral garbs of the deceased, richly trimmed with numerous metal pendants, similar in shape to those discovered in indigenous burials, attest to direct links with the local tradition (Gaydukevich 1949: 394).

with rings in their beaks are shown, flying towards a king sitting under a canopy and another king or hero (Russel 1987: 310).

Eagles holding wreaths in their beaks are shown alone on the reverse of Bosporan coins (fig. 12: 4; Frolova 1979: pls. 40: 6–28: 41; 42: 1–3; Anokhin 1989: Nos. 618, 618a, 619, 625). That these eagles were conceived as a local, and not a Roman emblem, is indicated by their depiction with portraits of Roman emperors on the reverse of some Bosporan coins (Anokhin 1989: Nos. 584, 586a, 628a, 630b, 633v), where they occupy the place of Bosporan royal emblems, such as Poseidon's trident and Heracles' club (e.g., Anokhin 1989: Nos. 629b, 630v, 631v, 632a, 632b, 633a, etc.; cf. above, I. 3). Thus, eagles on the Tanais stelae of *Theos Hypsistos* may have been conceived as symbols of glory and victory.

2.4.2.6 *The Name of Theos Hypsistos in Tanais*

As to the name of the god, portrayed on the stele of the Tanais thiasotes, the passage from Jamblichus (Δραματικόν 9), discussed in detail above (1.3.2.3) in connection with Aphrodite of Tanais, may be instructive. Jamblichus mentions there a god Pharnouchos, whose name, obviously related to the Iranian *pharn*, perfectly fits a supreme solar deity, granting grace and power.[50] Wüst (1938: 1856) suggests that Pharnouchos be compared with the lunar god Men Pharnaces, known also as Pharnos, who was one of the most popular deities of the Pontus (T. Reinach 1895: 237–238).[51] Pharnouchos is mentioned in the same sentence with Pharsiris and Tanais, whose mysteries, according to Jamblichus, were celebrated in Aphrodite's honor. This phrase alludes to a connection between Pharnouchos and Aphrodite, who was perhaps worshipped in two aspects, as Pharsiris and as (the goddess of) Tanais.

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[50] It has been mentioned above (1.3.2.3), that the name Pharnouchos is attested elsewhere as belonging to mortals. Yet in the area of the Bosporus the word *pharn* occurs in composite names of gods. A gold amulet with an inscription ΘΕΩ ΟΥΑΤΑΦΑΡΝΟ was found in the Kuban area (Tolstoy and Kondakov 1889: 45, fig. 33). The word Οὐταφάρνης is interpreted by Miller (cited by Litvinskiy 1968: 70) as *wat-farna*, meaning the *pharn* of a room or a dwelling, which implies that the god was the guardian of the home (hearth); Abayev (1949: 164; 186) suggests *vaca-farna*, a combination of "(sacred) word" and *pharn*, which denotes a loftier role. In any event, Οὐταφάρνης of the inscription on this amulet is in all probability the name of the god.

[51] See however Boyce and Grenet 1992: 287 and Olshausen 1990: 1887–1888 for the interpretation of the temple of Men Pharnacou at Cabeira, mentioned by Strabo (12.2.31), as built or rebuilt by a king named Pharnaces, probably Pharnaces I of Pontus.

This brings together Pharnouchos and the Day of Tanais, the festival commemorated in the earliest inscription of the thiasotes of Tanais (*CIRB* 1259), which features a mounted god. This festival must have been dedicated to the patron deity of the city.[52] Participation of a special committee of the thiasotes in the organization of the Day of Tanais may be explained by a relation between the god, or rather, as argued above, the goddess of Tanais and Pharnouchos, who seems to be a precursor of the anonymous *Theos Hypsistos*.

This does not imply that the Most High God was called Pharnouchos elsewhere. To be sure, Scythians called their solar god Goitosyros. It is plausible that Sindo-Maeotians addressed as Astara the goddess whom Scythians called Argimpasa (1.1.1.7). It is also very likely that different Scythian, Sarmatian, and Sindo-Maeotian tribes had distinct names for the precursors of *Theos Hypsistos*. The abstract name of the officially recognized god was perhaps intended to prevent unwanted disagreements about the divine name and unite all the subjects of the Bosporan kings in the worship of one supreme god, the patron of the dynasty and the defender of the people.

2.4.3 *The Synods of Theos Hypsistos and Iranian Männerbünde*

As already argued above, the exclusively male composition of the Bosporan synods of *Theos Hypsistos* and a number of offices distinguish them from the "normal" Greek and Roman private cult associations. Rostovtzev (1918: 184–185; 1989: 199–200) in fact regards Bosporan collegia as military organizations and sacral and political associations of citizens.

These peculiarities find their explanation in a hypothesis that the Iranian tradition of *Männerbünde* underlies the structure of the Bosporan synods (cf. Beskow 1978: 16). Wikander (1938) demonstrates that written sources, first and foremost the *Avesta*, contain evidence of these ancient Iranian male societies of youthful warriors. These were called *merak* in Old Persian, corresponding to Arian *marya-* (Wikander 1938: 81). Wikander's approach was accepted by Widengren (1938:

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[52] And not to an anniversary of the reconstruction of the city after its crushing by Polemo, as Salač (1955: 216–217) and Boltunova (1964: 204) assume.

311–351; 1965: 23–26; 1969), Dumézil (1970), Gnoli (1980: 83, 181–186, 190), Grantovskiy (1980: 132, 136, 140), Lincoln (1981: 122–132), and Frye (1983: 53, 83; cf. 55).

Trever (1947: 73–75, 80) shows that age classes, which are commonly associated with *Männerbünde*, existed in Achaemenian Persia; Widengren (1969: 12–21, 83–84) arrives at the same conclusion. In fact, Xenophon not only describes the division of male aristocracy into four age groups (*Cyr.* 1.2.3), with clear boundaries defining them (*Cyr.* 1.2.8), but also mentions separate tutors of boys and youths, with distinct responsibilities (*Cyr.* 1.2.12; cf. Schurtz 1902: 171). Intensive military training of Persian boys and youths-*cardaces* and the latter's secluded life and thefts to earn their daily bread (ἀπὸ κλοπείας τρεφόμενοι) are described by Strabo (15.3.18).[53] Temporary isolation from society and forced thefts distinguish this institution as a classical example of a *Männerbund* (Widengren 1969: 83; Brenner 1982: 145). As far as one can judge from the legendary biography of Mithradates the Great by Justinus (37.2), the future king in his early years passed through several age classes (Widengren 1965: 237–238; 1969: 86). Parthian aristocratic warrior societies belong to the same tradition (Widengren 1965: 26). Unquestionable vestiges of *Männerbünde* were preserved until recently among modern peoples of Central Asia (Tolstov 1948: 311–317; Snesarev 1963), as well as among the Ossetians (Ivanchik 1988: 43–44).

Boyce (1987; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 484) severely criticizes Wikander's (1938) views, as well the work of scholars who develop them, notably Lincoln (1981). Nevertheless, while rejecting the possibility that warrior societies developed during the proto-Indo-Iranian stage,[54] corresponding to the Late Neolithic period in archaeological terminology, she still admits that "the Bronze Age brought into existence the professional warrior-band, celestially reflected in the Maruts" (Boyce 1987: 513, 524).

There is also some evidence alluding to the existence of *Männerbünde* in the South Russian steppes (Grantovskiy 1980: 132, 136, 140). Herodotus (1.216; cf. 4.26) and Strabo (11.8.6) record the custom of the Massagetae of eating their old men, which presumably reflects the existence of age classes (Trever 1947: 74). The pseudo-hippocratic treatise *De aere* (22) describes *Enareis* as men who wore women's dress, performed women's jobs and spoke like women (. . . γυναικεῖα ἐργάζονται καὶ ὡς αἱ γυναῖκες διαλέγονται ὁμοίως . . .; above, 1.2.1.3). A language which is kept secret from the opposite sex and a strict division of occupations proper to men and women are indicative of *Männerbünde*.[55]

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[53] For further evidence on *cardaces* see Bremmer 1982: 144–145.

[54] For "men's houses" in the Indo-Aryan tradition see Vasilkov 1990. I am grateful to the author for having communicated his paper to me.

Ivanchik (1988) ingeniously argues that a number of classical authors (Polyaen. 7.2.1; Aelian. *Var. Hist.* 14.46, Plin. *Hist. Nat.* 8.143, probably also Val. Flaccus 6.107–113), as well as some Assyrian sources, allude to self-identification of bands of young Scythian warriors as packs of furious dogs. To be sure, lycanthropy is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of warrior societies of Indo-Europeans in general (Przyluski 1940; Burkert 1983: 88; Eisler 1951; Dumézil 1970: 141; Lincoln 1981: 126; Bremmer 1982: 141; Ivanchik 1988: 40–41, with references), and Iranians in particular (Wikander 1938: 65–66; Widengren 1938: 328; Gnoli 1980: 40, 185, 244; Ivanchik 1988).[56]

Another characteristic of Indo-European gangs of pre-adult males is their separation from society and participation in military raids of initiatory nature (Jeanmaire 1939: 26–43; Widengren 1969: 88–99; Dumézil 1970: 61–64; Bremmer 1982: 137–140). To such bands of young warriors from the South Russian steppes evidently belong the Parni, i.e., groups of Dahi, "Scythians who live about Maeotis" (Strabo 11.9.3), who invaded Parthia and settled on the Ochus (cf. Strabo 11.8.2; Justinus 41.1.10; Frye 1983: 206–207). These "some of Dahi called Parni" (τῶν Δαῶν τινὰς . . . καλουμένους Πάρνους,[57] Strabo 11.9.2), in the opinion of Trever (1947: 84) and Colpe (1983:

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[55] Notably, the name of the Ossetian warrior god Ouastyrdzhi, identified with St. George, may be pronounced by men exclusively; women must use metonymies: "patron of men" or "men's saint" (Ivanchik 1988: 43).

[56] Very interesting in this respect is a recently published torque from a first-century AD Sarmatian Kobyakovo tumulus (Prokhorova 1994: fig. 2). This openwork gold torque, still awaiting a comprehensive analysis of its mythological and cultic significance, features thrice the same scene of a battle between a dragon and two monstrous canine-headed and canine-legged warriors, wearing armor and fighting with a club. Since there are two warriors, one fighting the dragon from the front and the other from the rear, they probably symbolize a group of werewolves or wolves wearing armor. Dragon fight, as Wikander (1938: 80–81, 106) and Widengren (1969: 16–21, 46–47) show, is a classical feature of *Männerbund* mythology, especially among the Iranians. The club, a most primitive weapon, characterizes the *Männerbund* as a pristine warrior band (Wikander 1938: 60; Widengren 1969: 61). Thus, the Kobyakov torque appears to feature a scene from the mythology of warrior societies.

[57] Or in some manuscripts 'Απάρνους.

851), were not a separate tribe, as usually assumed, but bands of young men of Dahi. Pompeius Trogus (2.4.1) describes a military expedition of Scythian youth (*iuventus*) initiated by two youths of royal birth (Grantovskiy 1980: 140).

It is to be observed that the term *Männerbünde* is applied to a rather wide range of phenomena, from secret societies, based on selective membership, to age classes, which include all males of the same age, enjoying full rights within a given community.[58] These social organizations naturally undergo various transformations over the course of time. Even if the exact nature of early Iranian male societies had been clarified—which is regrettably not the case (Lincoln 1981: 125)—their Sarmatian and Scythian modifications would still remain obscure.

Thus, Iranians developed male societies in the Bronze Age at the latest, warrior bands and age classes are attested in various Iranian communities at later stages, and there are some allusions to the existence of such institutions in Iranian tribes inhabiting South Russia.

The connection of Iranian *Männerbünde* with the cult of Mithra is conspicuous (Wikander 1938: 58, 86; Widengren 1938: 316; 1965: 13; 1966: 434). Mithra was in fact worshipped almost exclusively by men (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 486). Iranian *Männerbünde* performed ecstatic cults; the drinking of the exhilarating sacred *haoma*, the elixir of the life force, was one of their major rituals (Wikander 1938: 64–65)—a rhyton is held by the god portrayed on the Tanais stele and on the wreath from the royal burial. The cult of the dead was an important sphere of the activities of the *Männerbünde* (Wikander 1938: 72–76)—Bosporan thiasotes erected numerous stelae commemorating their deceased members. The cult in male societies was associated with fire-worship (Wikander 1938: 77–78)—the Bosporan rider-god is shown in front of a blazing altar, and the cult of the fire is eminent in the funeral rites of *Tanaites*. *Männerbünde* guarded the maintenance of justice and punishment of infringers and were extremely meticulous in moral issues (Shultz 1902: 322; Wikander 1938: 80)—*philagathos* and *paraphilagathos* were among the leading magistrates of the Bosporan synods. Male societies were intimately associated with royal power (Wikander 1938: 78–79)—Bosporan collegia and their Most High God reveal close connections with the ruling dynasty and its cults. A distinctive aspect of male societies is their usual subdivision into age classes or congruity with age classes—in an epitaph of a thiasote from Panticapaeum his comrades style themselves as ἥλικες (οἱ) θιέσου (*CIRB* 137), "members of the thiasos of the same age." A classical feature of male societies were initiations which allowed the members to join an ideal community of deceased and living warriors (Wikander 1938: 75, 94; Lincoln 1981: 128–129)—the use of the term "brother" and a rigid hierarchy may allude to some sort of initiations. Noteworthy, the paradigmatic warrior society, Indian *Maruts*, following Indra, are called either his friends or brothers (Widengren 1969: 42–43).[59]

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[58] For a collection of data from various epochs and areas around the globe see Schurtz 1902.

Activities of the *Männerbünde* covered the same spheres that are supposed by the titles of the officials of the Bosporan synods worshipping *Theos Hypsistos*: military and athletic training (*gymnasiarchos*), supervision of boys' and teenagers' behavior (*neaniskarchos*), control over members' conduct and morals (*philagathos* and *paraphilagathos*), and naturally, common cult (*hiereus*). These Greek words certainly cannot be regarded as precise equivalents of Iranian notions, and they may result from a later development of these notions in the semi-Greek environment, but they are nevertheless suggestive of a cultic and military organization with comprehensive social activities.

The incorporation of this ancient Iranian institution into the social system of the Bosporan Kingdom demanded its reorganization and hellenization. Sauromates I (AD 93/4–123/4) is in fact called *ktistes* in an inscription of *neoi* from Bithyinian Nicaea. Rostovtzev (1989c: 202), therefore, suggests that the Bosporan synods were related to the associations of *neoi* in Asia Minor. Associations of elders (*gerousiai, gerontes, presbuteroi*) and youth (*neoi, neoteroi*) were a common phenomenon in Roman Asia Minor (Poland 1909: 98–102; Magie 1950: 854–860; Sventzitzkaya 1981), but made their first appearance earlier, in the second–first centuries BC. These associations were intimately connected with the cult of deified emperors and Dea Roma, as well as with major cults of their cities (Sventzitzkaya 1981: 44–45). They co-operated with their *poleis*, even issued degrees together with city authorities, but nevertheless did not converge with the municipal organs (Sventzitzkaya 1981: 44–45). Their activities embraced the organization of feasts and public festivals; noteworthy, they possessed their own gymnasia, and had *gymnasiarchoi* among their officials (Sventzitzkaya 1981: 49).

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[59] Members of ancient German *Männerbünde* and Scandinavian *berserkir* also called themselves "brothers" (Widengren 1969: 53–55).

These associations differed however from the Bosporan collegia in many respects, notably in their admission of women and non-citizens (Sventzitzkaya 1981: 49–50) and the lack of uniformity in *cursus honorum*. Thus, even if the terminology of the Bosporan synods worshipping *Theos Hypsistos* was influenced by the usage common to the associations of *gerontes* and *neoi*, the organization of the Bosporan collegia was certainly not modeled on the examples from Asia Minor.

The use of Greek terms and certain principles of organization made the Iranian institution acceptable to Bosporans of Greek origin. The amazing terminological uniformity inside the collegia worshipping *Theos Hypsistos* must be the result of a well-considered action directed by the government (Rostovtzev 1989b: 202), otherwise terminological diversity characteristic of private cult associations of the Graeco-Roman world would be inevitable. To be sure, various thiasoi of other gods on the Bosporus display such dissimilarity.

Thus, in the first century AD cult associations of men worshipping *Theos Hypsistos* appeared to be the most effective form of military training, social order, and ideological organization of Bosporan citizens. These collegia owed at least some elements in their organization to the Iranian tradition of male societies. Preservation of ancient Iranian warrior societies, modified as they were, in the Bosporan Kingdom is not surprising: this form of social organization demonstrated its amazing steadiness.[60]

2.4.4 *Conclusions*

Several anonymous gods were worshipped on the Bosporus during the first centuries AD. The Jewish communities, which existed in the major ports of the country, addressed their god as the Most High, All-Mighty Blessed. In Cytaeum a deity resembling to a certain extent Sabazios, was invoked as a Thundering Heedful God. In Gorgippia an anonymous god was named the Just. No unequivocal connections may be established between these anonymous deities. On the Bosporus, as elsewhere in the Roman world, adherents of several cults addressed their gods by similar epithets, feeling no discomfort about this practice.

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[60] The conservation of numerous features of *Männerbünde* in the everyday life of Tadjiks and Uzbeks (Snesarev 1963) in the second half of the twentieth century may serve as a good example.

Some scholars consider Mithraic associations of the Roman Empire as another example of the modification of Iranian male societies in the Graeco-Roman environment (Widengren 1966: 446–452); Beskow (1978: 17–18) even suggests that the proto-Mithraic cult evolved in the Bosporan collegia, and spread from there to Moesia and further westward and eastward.

The most popular among these anonymous gods was *Theos Hypsistos* of the Bosporan synods. The Most High God of the Tanais collegia and of similar organizations elsewhere on the Bosporus was essentially an Iranian deity. Although a precise definition of the precursors of *Theos Hypsistos* is scarcely possible, at least currently, this god appears to have combined features of several Iranian deities, the rider-god of the Scythians and Sindo-Maeotians, the local solar deity of the indigenous tribes of the Bosporan area, and probably also Mithra. This god, portrayed as a horseman, appears as a divine patron of the royal dynasty, alongside Aphrodite *Ourania*. Documents left by collegia worshipping *Theos Hypsistos*, especially those discovered in Tanais, shed light on the multiple activities of the thiasotes and reveal important aspects of their cult. They suggest that synods revering the Most High God were probably associated with the Iranian warrior societies.

SUMMARY

The cultural impact of the indigenous peoples of the South Russian steppe on the Greeks was perceptible in the Greek colonies of the Northern Black Sea coast, but was especially pronounced in the area of the Bosporus. The reason may perhaps be sought in the domination of a local ruling dynasty, which established itself as early as 438 BC, and brought its ancestral cults to the capital city of Panticapaeum. This family was replaced by Mithradates VI Eupator and his successors, whose more than hundred-year-long wars (the first century BC–early first century AD) against outside foes, as well as inside the royal house, devastated the country and brought about a mass influx of new ethnic elements into Bosporan urban and rural settlements. These events resulted in profound changes in Bosporan culture and religion.

The indigenous neighbors of the Bosporan Greeks were Scythians, Sindo-Maeotians, and Sarmatians, mainly of Iranian stock. Their cults and mythology are known from three main sources: Greek written tradition, archaeological data, and comparative studies based primarily on the *Avesta*. This evidence is far from being unequivocal, but it must be taken into account in a study of Bosporan religion, which developed as a result of interaction between the Greek and the local Iranian traditions.

The mutual influence of Greeks and indigenous peoples became the most prominent feature of Bosporan religion in the first centuries AD, when Greek, Scythian, Sindo-Maeotian, and Sarmatian traditions fused into a syncretistic Graeco-Iranian culture. This religion was dominated by two cults: of the Celestial Aphrodite (Aphrodite *Ourania*) and of the anonymous Most High God (*Theos Hypsistos*). The history and organization of the two cults differ, but both had in common an intimate connection with royal power and mixed Graeco-Iranian origins.

Aphrodite *Ourania* was the Great Goddess of the Bosporus during its entire millennium-long history. Greek colonists worshipped her from the late sixth century BC. The fifth–first century BC monuments of her cult, and above all her title, Aphrodite *Ourania* the Mistress of Apaturum, disclose local as well as Near Eastern connections of the cult. At this early stage, Aphrodite *Ourania* had already become the most ardently venerated deity of the Bosporan Greeks.

A Scythian goddess named Argimpasa was identified with Aphrodite *Ourania* both by the Greeks and by the Scythians themselves. Evidently owing to Near Eastern impact, which shaped the images of both the Scythian Aphrodite *Ourania* and her Bosporan counterpart, the two goddesses resembled each other in many important aspects: they were manifestly androgynic and belligerent, patronesses of kings and givers of royal power. Like the Bosporan Aphrodite, the indigenous Aphrodite *Ourania* clearly prevailed over other goddesses. The Scythian Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania* acquired a vast domain which comprised fertility and sacredness, the heaven and the nether world, and the life of Scythian sovereigns and commoners. Numerous links connected this goddess with an apparently less august deity, the anguipede Scythian foremother. Images of both occur in the same archaeological complexes—they share many features and probably also functions, but nevertheless remain clearly distinct.

The amalgamation of the two majestic divinities, the Bosporan Aphrodite *Ourania*, the Mistress of Apatouron and the indigenous goddess, Argimpasa-Aphrodite *Ourania*, in the first centuries AD, culminated in the emergence of an overwhelming divine personality, queen of heaven and of earth, the tutelary goddess of the kingdom. The outstanding importance of the Celestial Aphrodite in the life of the Bosporans is attested by epigraphic and numismatic evidence, art objects and other archaeological remains, as well as by accounts of ancient authors. On the Bosporus, as in Scythia, the regal goddess was accompanied by her semi-bestial correlative, the anguipede monster.

Cults of anonymous deities, designated as the Most High God (*Theos Hypsistos*), the Most High God All-Mighty and Blessed (*Theos Hypsistos Pantorator Eulogetos*), the Thundering Heeding God (*Theos Bronton Epekoos*), the Just God (*Theos Dikaios*), are initially attested only in the first century AD. The different designations were not mere epithets of one and the same deity. Documents of these cults attest to different organization, membership, ethnic provenance, and sex of the devotées, all signifying that on the Bosporus several distinct anonymous gods were worshipped.

The bulk of documents mentioning *Theos Hypsistos* was left by members of collegia of worshippers (thiasotes) of *Theos Hypsistos* from Tanais. Since Schürer published his influential article more than a century ago, Bosporan devotées of the *Theos Hypsistos* cult were considered as pagan sympathizers of Judaism, semi-Jews, semi-Gentiles. This approach is here revised for several reasons. Some Tanais associations styled themselves as "fearing the Most High God," and Schürer maintains that this term indicates their Jewish connections. However, the phrase was used in pagan, Jewish, and Christian contexts, and does not imply association with a particular religious milieu.

Jews were indeed present in the Bosporan Kingdom, and their documents are addressed to the Most High God All-Mighty and Blessed (*Theos Hypsistos Pantokrator Eulogetos*), or simply the God (*Theos*). But numerous instances from Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and other areas demonstrate beyond any doubt that in the same region several anonymous gods could be revered as the Most High. Gentiles, Jews, and Christians applied the same designation, *Theos Hypsistos*, to their gods. The epigraphic evidence left by Bosporan worshippers of anonymous gods definitely describes them as belonging to different religious structures and believing in different highest gods.

Theos Hypsistos was venerated first and foremost by members of the Tanais collegia, but also by thiasotes from other Bosporan cities, and his cult was apparently patronized by the royal dynasty. Almost all male citizens of Tanais were thiasotes of *Theos Hypsistos*. The proselytic hypothesis therefore makes Tanais a city of Jewish sympathizers. However, no traces of Jewish presence have been thus far discovered in Tanais, which renders Jewish influence hardly possible. The archaeological excavations of Tanais revealed a city with a half-Iranian population writing pidgin Greek, but probably speaking Sarmatian. Tanais has so far produced no temples, but vestiges of barbarian cults abound, and the city necropoleis resemble indigenous burial grounds. The same people who lived in this semi-barbaric city set up dedications to *Theos Hypsistos*. The origins of his cult are to be sought in their ancestral cults, slightly modified to make them more easily accepted by the Greeks.

The Most High God of the Bosporus appears as a complex deity, in whose image features of several gods blended: the solar god worshipped by the Iranian peoples of the South Russian steppes, who may have been associated with Mithra and probably the mounted god of the Scythians and Sindo-Maeotians. The organization of exclusively male Bosporan collegia of worshippers of *Theos Hypsistos* resembles that of Iranian warrior societies.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABSA	*Annual of the British School at Athens.*
ADZh	Rostovtzev M. I., *Antichnaya dekorativnaya zhivopis' na yuge Rossii* (Ancient decorative painting in South Russia). Vol. 1 (text); 2 (plates). St. Petersburg, 1913–14.
AG	*Antichnye goroda Severnogo Prichernomor'ya* (Ancient cities of the Northern Black Sea littoral). Eds. V. F. Gaydukevich and M. I. Maximova. Moscow-Leningrad, 1955.
AGSP	*Antichnye gosudarstva Severnogo Prichernomor'ya* (Ancient states on the Northern Black Sea littoral). Eds. of the volume: G. A. Koshelenko, I. T. Kruglikova and V. S. Dolgorukov. (No volume number).—*Archeologiya SSSR.* Ed. of the series B. A. Rybakov. Moscow, 1984.
AJPh	*American Journal of Philology.*
AM	*Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung.*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt.* Berlin-New York.
ASGE	*Arkheologicheskiy sbornik Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha* (Proceedings in archaeology of the State Hermitage). Leningrad (St. Petersburg).
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review.*
Bull.	J. et L. Robert, "Bulletin épigraphique", in *RÉG.*
CCET	Z. Gočeva and M. Oppermann, *Corpus Cultus Equitis Thracii* I. *Monumenta Orae Ponti Euxini Bulgariae.* Leiden, 1979.
CCID	M. Hörig and E. Schwertheim, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni.* Leiden, 1987.
CCIS	*Corpus Cultus Iovis Sabazii.* Vol. 1. M. Vermaseren. Vols. 2–3. E. A. Lane. Leiden, 1983–1989.
CHI	*The Cambridge History of Iran.* Cambridge, 1968–1985.
CIG	*Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.*
CIJ	J. B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum.* Rome.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.*
CIRB	*Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani.* Eds. V. V. Struve et al. Moscow-Leningrad, 1965.
Colloquia . . .	*Colloquia Pontica* I. *New Studies on the Black Sea Littoral.* Ed. G. R. Tsetskhladze. Oxford 1996.
CPJ	*Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum.* Vol. 3. Eds. V. A. Tcherikover, A. Fuks, M. Stern, D. M. Lewis. Cambridge, Mass., 1964.
CRAI	*Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres.*
DGKSA	*Drevneyshiye gosudarstva Kavkaza i Sredney Azii* (Ancient states in the Caucases and Central Asia). Ed. G. A. Koshelenko. (No volume number).—*Archeologiya SSSR.* Ed. of the series B. A. Rybakov. Moscow, 1985.
Diaspora . . .	*Diaspora Jews and Judaism. Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel.* Eds. J. A. Overman and R. S. MacLennan. Atlanta, 1992.
Éléments . . .	*Éléments orientaux dans la religion grecque ancienne. Travaux du Centre d'études supérieures spécialisé d'histoire des religions de Strasbourg.* Paris, 1960.
EC	Tacheva-Hitova M. *Eastern Cults in Moesia Inferior and Dacia.* Leiden, 1983.
EI	*Encyclopaedia Iranica.* Ed. E. Yarshater. London-Boston.

FGH	F. Jacoby. *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker.* Berlin, 1923.
FHG	C. Müller. *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecarum.* Vols. 1–5. Paris 1848–1853.
GGR	Nilsson M. P. *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion.* Vol. 1^3. Munich, 1967; Vol. 2^2. Munich, 1955.
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies.*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review.*
IAK	*Izvestiya Imperatorskoy Arkheologicheskoy Komissii* (Bulletin of the Imperial Archaeological Comission).
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae.*
IG Bulg	G. Michailov, *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae.* Vol. 1^2, 2–4. Serdicae, 1958–1970.
IDelos	F. Durrbach, *Inscriptions de Délos.* Vols. 1–7. Paris, 1926–1937.
IMagnesia	O. Kern, *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Mäander.* Berlin, 1900.
IMylasa	W. Blümel, *Die Inschriften von Mylasa. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien.* 34–35 (1987–88).
IGAIMK	*Izvestiya Gosudarstvennoy Akademii Istorii Material'noy Kul'tury* (Bulletin of the State Academy of the History of Material Culture).
IGR	R. Cagnat, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes.* Paris, 1911.
IKAM	*Istoria i kul'tura antichnogo mira* (History and culture of the Classical World). Ed. M. M. Kobylina. Moscow, 1977.
IOSPE	B. Latyshev. *Inscriptiones orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini.* Vols. 1, 2, 4, 1^2. Petropoli 1885, 1890, 1901, 1916.
IRAIMK	*Izvestiya Rossiyskoy Akademii Istorii Material'noy Kul'tury* (Bulletin of the Russian Academy of the History of Material Culture).
JA	*Journal Asiatique.*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies.*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies.*
KAM	*Kul'tura antichnogo mira* (The culture of the Classical world). Ed. A. I. Boltunova. Moscow, 1966.
KlP	*Der Kleine Pauly.* Vols. 1–5. Stuttgart, 1964–1975.
KSIA	*Kratkiye Soobshcheniya Instituta Arkheologii AN SSSR* (Short communications of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR).
KSIIMK	*Kratkiye Soobshcheniya Instituta Istorii Material'noy Kul'tury AN SSSR* (Short communications of the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR).
KW	Kieseritzky G. and Watzinger C. *Griechische Grabreliefs aus Südrussland.* Berlin, 1909.
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae.* Vol. 2. Zürich-Munich, 1984.
LSAM	Sokolowski F. *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure.* Paris, 1955.
MAMA	*Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiquae.* Vols. 1–9. Manchester-London, 1929–1988.
MAR	*Materialy po arkheologii Rossii* (Materials on the archaeology of Russia).
MASP	*Materialy po arkheologii Severnogo Prichernomor'ya* (Materials on the archaeology of the Northern Black sea littoral). Odessa.
MIA	*Materialy i issledovaniya po arkheologii SSSR* (Materials and researches on the archaeology of the USSR).
NAA	*Narody Azii i Afriki* (Peoples of Asia and Africa).
NE	*Numizmatica i Epigraphica* (Numismatics and epigraphy).
OAK	*Otchety Archeologicheskoy Komissii* (Reports of the Archaeological Commission).
OK	O. Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta.* Berlin, 1922.
OGIS	W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae.* Vols. 1–2. 1903–05.
PAK	*Problemy antichnoy kul'tury* (Problems of Classical culture), ed. G. A. Koshelenko. Moscow, 1986.

PAV	*Peterburgskiy arkheologicheskiy vestnik* (St. Petersburg archaeological bulletin).
RA	*Rossiyskaya Arkheologiya* (Russian Archaeology).
RE	*Pauly-Wissowa Realencyclopädie für klassische Altertumswissenschaft.*
RÉG	*Revue des Études Grecques.*
Religion and Religious Practice . . .	*Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom.* Ed. P. Bilde et al. Aarhus, 1990.
SA	*Sovetskaya Arkheologiya* (Soviet archaeology).
SE	*Sovetskaya Etnographiya* (Soviet anthropology).
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum.*
SGMII	*Soobshcheniya Gosudarstvennogo Muzeya Isorii Iskusstv im. A. S. Pushkina* (Proceedings of the State Museum of the History of Arts named after A. S. Pushkin).
SS	*Skify i Sarmaty* (Scythians and Sarmatians). Ed. A. I. Terenozhkin. Kiev, 1977.
SSSV	*Stepi Evropeyskoy chasti SSSR v skifo-sarmatkoye vremya* (Steppes of the European part of the USSR in the Scytho-Sarmatian period). Ed. A. I. Melyukova. (No volume number.)—*Archeologiya SSSR.* Ed. of the series B. A. Rybakov. Moscow, 1989.
StCl	*Studii Clasice* Bucuresti.
Syll^3	W. Dittenberger. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum.* Vols. 1–3. Ed. 3. Lipsiae, 1915–24.
TAM	*Tituli Asiae Minoris.*
TGE	*Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha* (Proceedings of the State Hermitage).
TSP	*Terrakoty Severnogo Prichernomor'ya.—Svod arkheologicheskikh. istochnikov.* Vol. G 1–11. (Terracottae of the Northern Black Sea littoral. Corpus of archaeological sources. Vol. G 1–11.) Ed. M. M. Kobylina. Moscow 1970 (parts 1–2), 1974 (parts 3–4).
VDI	*Vestnik Drevney Istorii* (Bulletin of ancient history).
VS	Diels H. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker.* Revised by W. Kranz. Berlin, 1951.
ZhMNP	*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya* (Journal of the Ministry of Public Eductation).
ZOAO	*Zapiski Odesskogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshchestva* (Memoirs of the Archaeological Society of Odessa).

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ADDENDA

To 0.2. For a discussion of the problem of cultural continuity on the Bosporus in Late Antiquity and new evidence for the history of the Bosporus in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, see: Yu. G. Vinogradov, "Pozdneantichny Bospor i rannyaya Vizantiya" ("Late Ancient Bosporus and Early Byzantium"), *VDI* 1. 1998, 233–247, and N. A. Frolova, "Problema kontinuiteta na pozdneantichnom Bospore po numizmaticheskim dannym" ("The Problem of Continuity in the Late Ancient Bosporus in the Light of Numismatic Data"), *VDI* 1. 1998, 247–262.

To 0.3. For the role of women in Eurasian nomadic societies and especially for warrior priestesses see a series of papers by J. Davis-Kimball: "Burial Practices of the Iranian Sarmatians," *Proceedings of the Seventh UCLA Indo-European Conference, Los Angeles, 1995. (Journal of Indo-European Studies. Monograph Series No 25)*, pp. 68–85; "Sauro-Sarmatian Nomadic Women: New Gender Identities," *The Journal of Indo-European Studies* 25. 3/4. 1997, 327–343; "Amazons, Priestesses, and Other Women of Status. Females in Eurasian Nomadic Societies," to appear in *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 5. I am grateful to Jeannine Davis-Kimball for having communicated to me the manuscript of her yet unpublished paper.

To 1.2.3. For Scythian art and its interpretation see the collection of papers *Zur graeco-skythischen Kunst.* Ed. K. Stähler. Münster, 1997. I owe this reference to the kindness of Dieter Metzler. Some papers published in this volume deal directly with subjects discussed in the book:

to 1.2.3.5, see the articles by F. Jünger, "Deutungsvorschläge zur sog. 'Sitzenden Göttin'," and by Chr. Ellinghaus, "Das Golddiadem aus dem Kurgan bei Sachnovka;"

to 1.2.3.2, see the article by J. Gebauer, "Rankengedanken—Zum Pektorale aus der Tolstaja Mogila."

To 1.2.3.1 and 1.2.3.2. A gold diadem from the Kul'-Oba tumulus feature bearded and winged figures wearing calathi, their tendril-shaped legs ending in sea-monsters and sprouting pomegranate fruits, which are being eaten by birds (D. Williams and J. Ogden, *Greek Gold*, New York, 1994, pp. 142–143, fig. 85). This diadem, which I have overlooked, proves that South Russian archaeological complexes produced representations of bearded anguipede creatures, like those depicted on artifacts from Olynthos and Athens, and suggests a South Russian provenance for the Hermitage acroterium. Moreover, the Kul'-Oba diadem reveals the androgyny of the Scythian snake-limbed goddess.

To 1.2.3.5. For the magical properties ascribed to mirrors and their role in Eurasian shamanic cultures, see D. Metzler, "Der Seher Mopsus auf den Münzen der Stadt Mallos," *Kernos* 3. 1990, 235–250, esp. 241–245.

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12. *1.* Kharko 1950: fig. 1. *2–11.* Burachkov 1884: pls. 27: 130; 30. 226; 31: 246; 27: 126; 31: 277; 30: 221; 31: 240; 32: 295; 32: 280; 27: 131. *12.* Rostovtzev 1913: pl. 2: 3.
13. *AGSP*: pl. 92: 3.
14. Korovina 1968: 11, fig. 9.
15. *1.* Kobylina 1978: fig. 51. *2.* Ivanova 1951b: fig. 7a. *3.* Boltunova 1991: fig. 1. *4.* Minns 1913: fig. 234.
16. Neverov 1980: No. 365.
17. *TSP* 1–2: pl. 52: 3.
18. *TSP* 3: pl. 56: 5.
19. Minns 1913: fig. 223.
20. Minns 1913: fig. 231.
21. *1–2.* Kruglikova 1952: fig. 41: 1, 2. *3.* Shelov 1965: fig. 1. *4.* Kruglikova 1952: fig. 41: 3. *5.* Tzekhmistrenko 1962: fig. 1.
22. Gajdukevič 1971: pl. 11.
23. Ivanova 1953: 118.
24. Gajdukevič 1971: pl. 141.
25. Gajdukevič 1971: pl. 140.
26. *AGSP*: pl. 115: 4.
27. Gajdukevič 1971: pl. 33.
28. Minns 1913: fig. 215.

PLATES AND MAPS

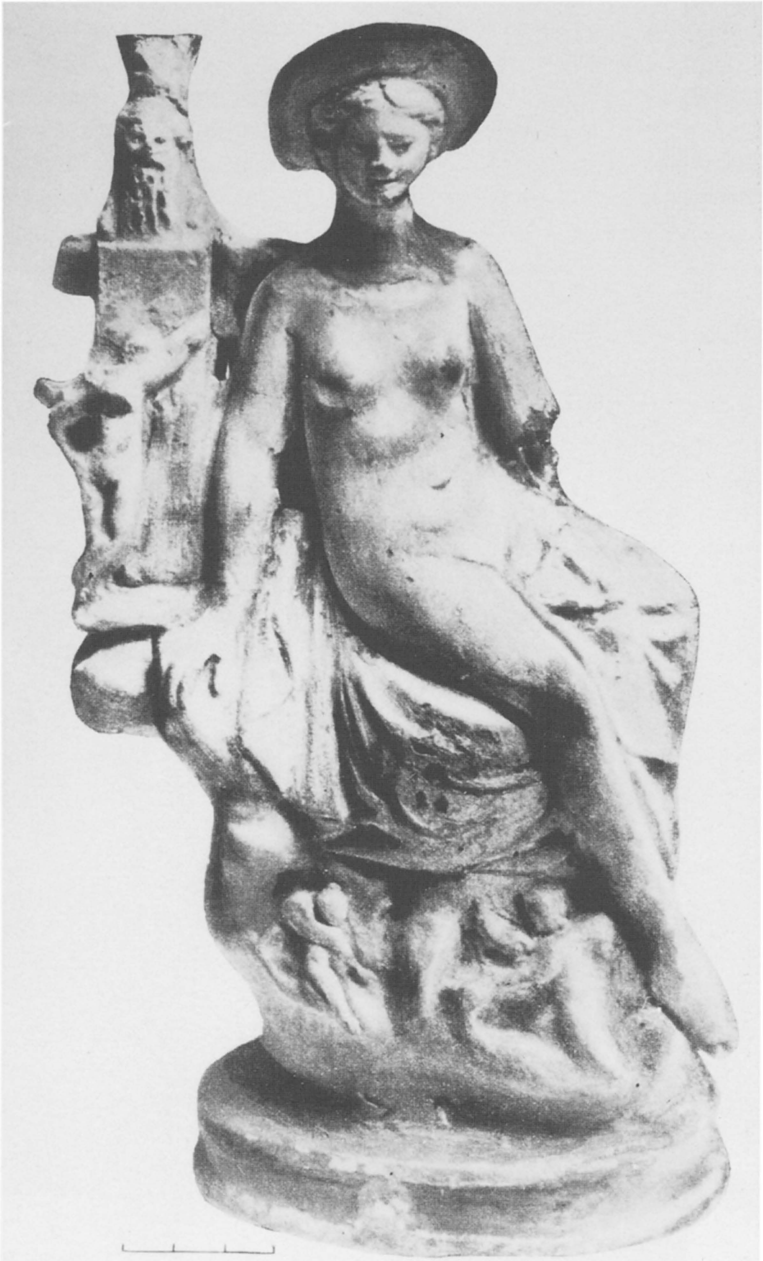

Plate 1. Aphrodite seating near a herm. Terracotta. First century AD. Panticapaeum.

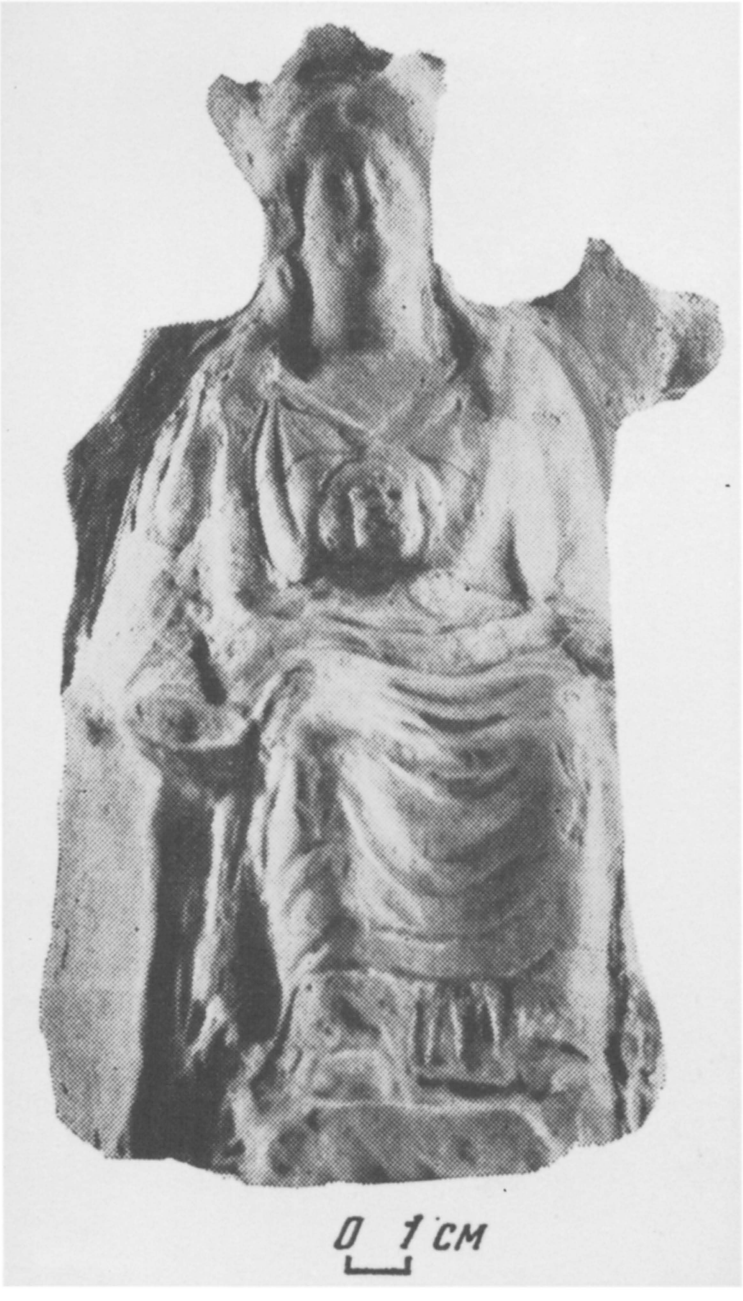

Plate 2. A seated goddess. Terracotta. Third–second centuries BC. Tyritaca.

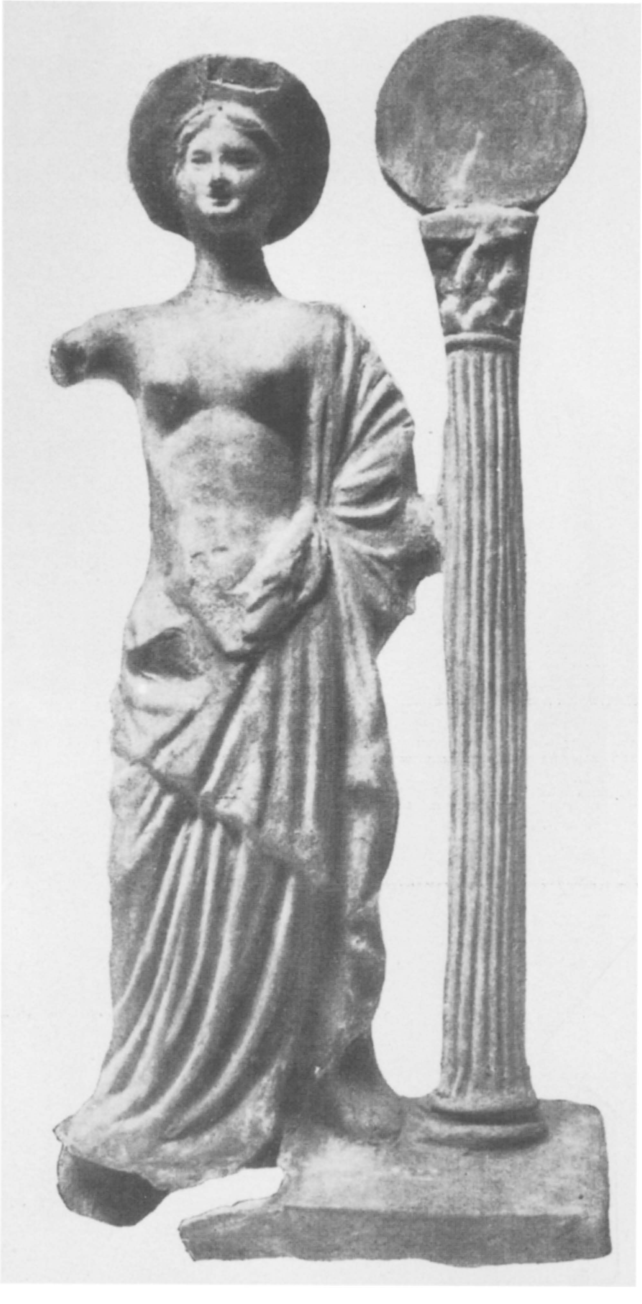

Plate 3. Aphrodite standing near a column topped with a sun disk. Terracotta. Second century BC. Panticapaeum.

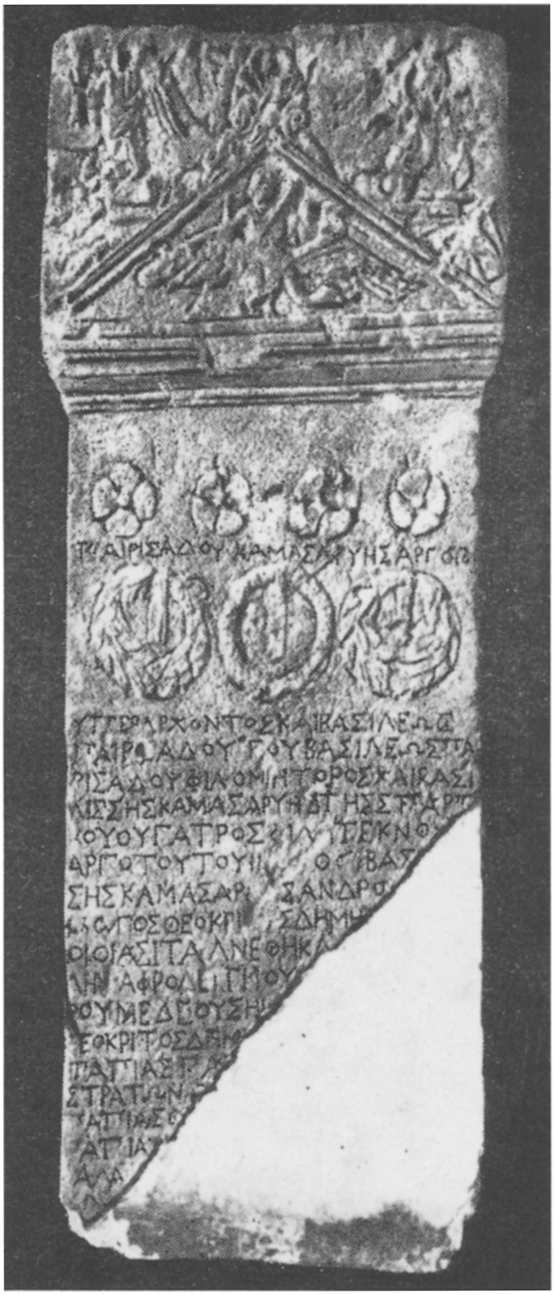

Plate 4. Stele with a dedication of a *thiasos* to Aphrodite *Ourania Apatourou medeousa* (*CIRB* 75)

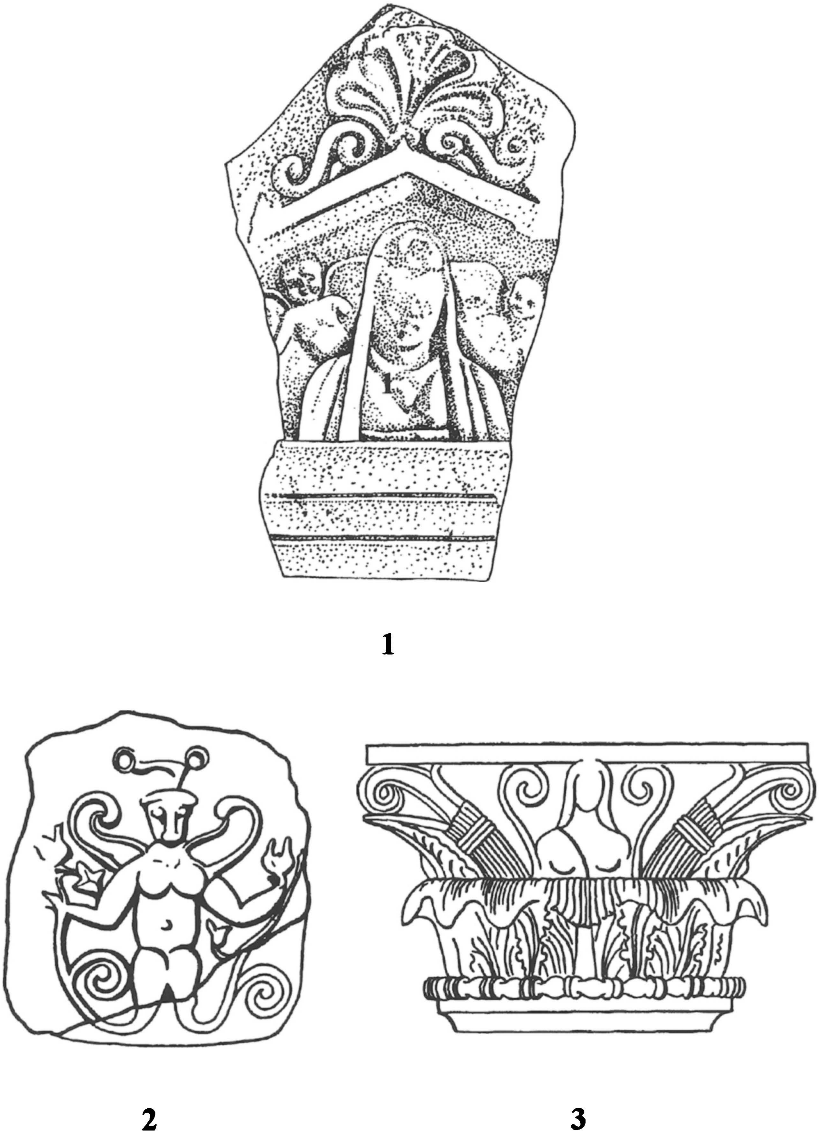

Plate 5.1. Gable of a stele from Batareyka II site. Limestone. 2. Plaque from the Chersonesos necropolis. Terracotta. 3. Capital of a column from Vani, Colchis.

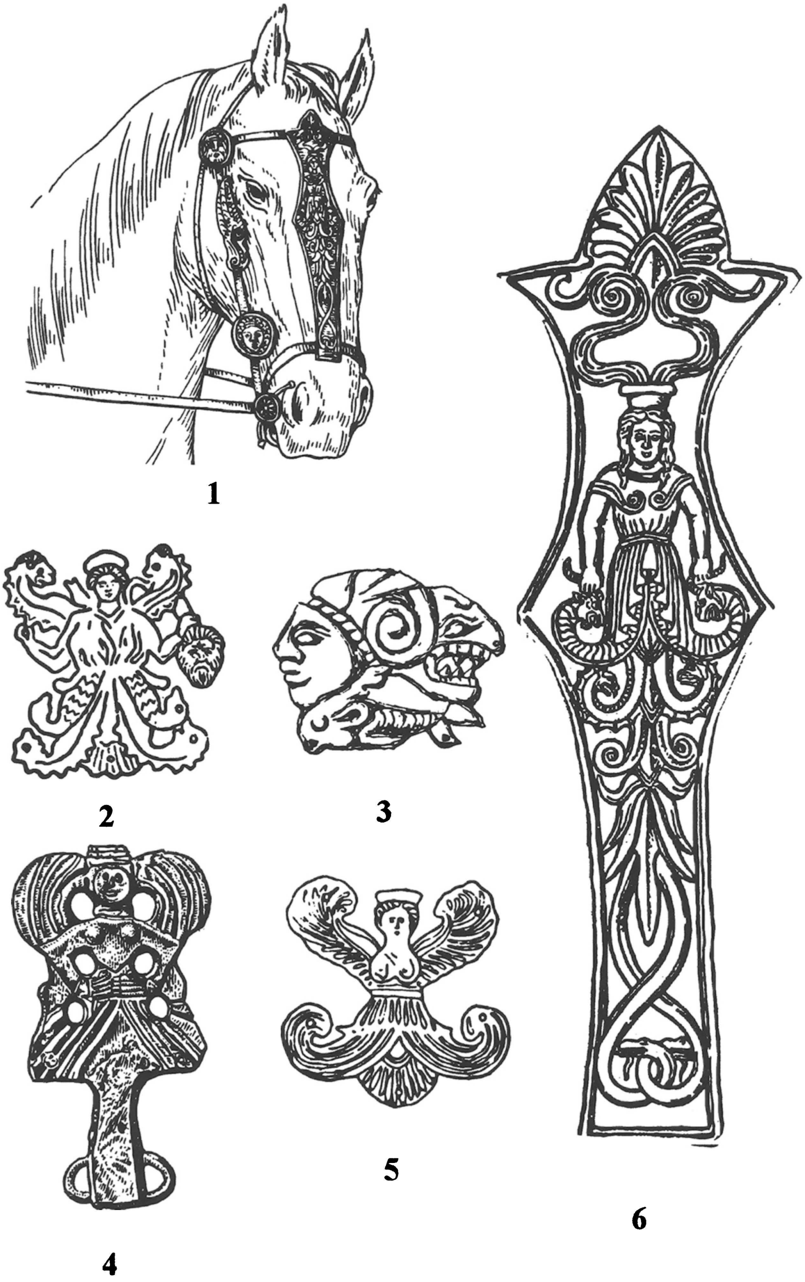

Plate 6.1. Gold decorations of the horse harness from the Tzymbalova Mogila tumulus. 2. Gold pendant from the Kul'-Oba tumulus. 3. Gold pendant from Nymphaeum. 4. Bronze scepter head from the Alexandropol'skiy tumulus. 5. Gold pendant from the Bol'shaya Bliznitza tumulus. 6. The forepiece from the Tzymbalova Mogila kit.

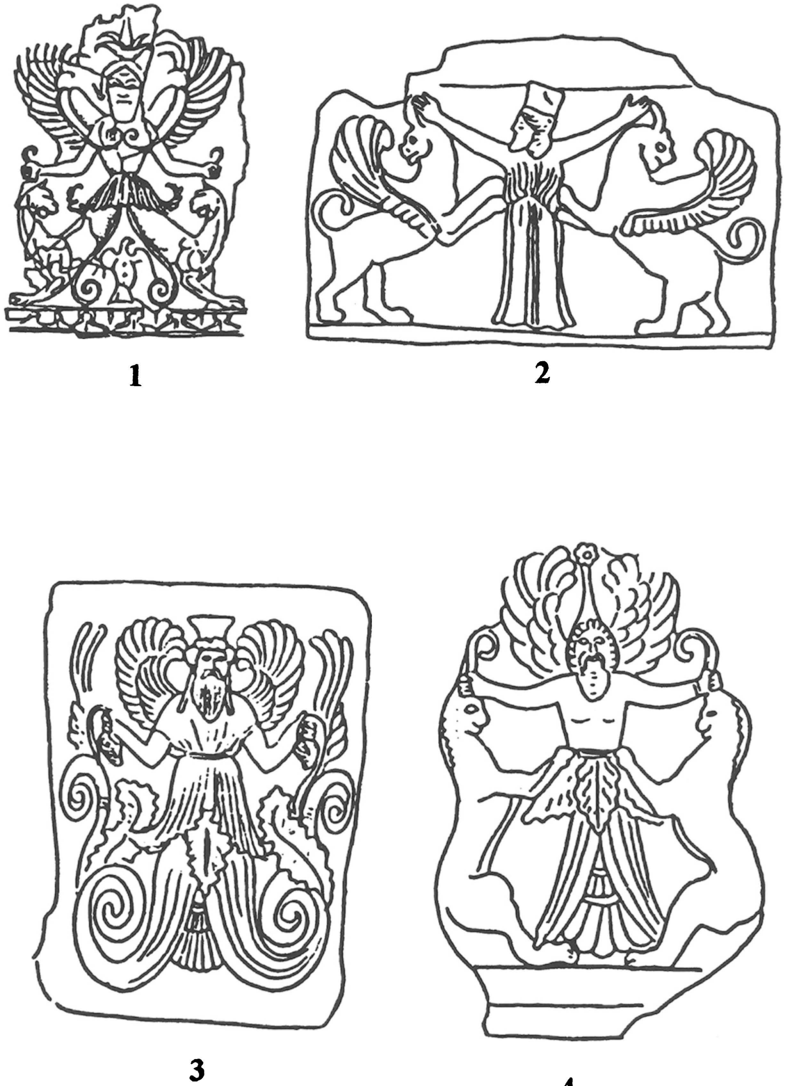

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Plate 7.1. Bronze relief from Olynthos. 2. Relief on a column base from Athens. 3. Relief on two marble thrones from Athens. 4. Acroterium of unknown origin.

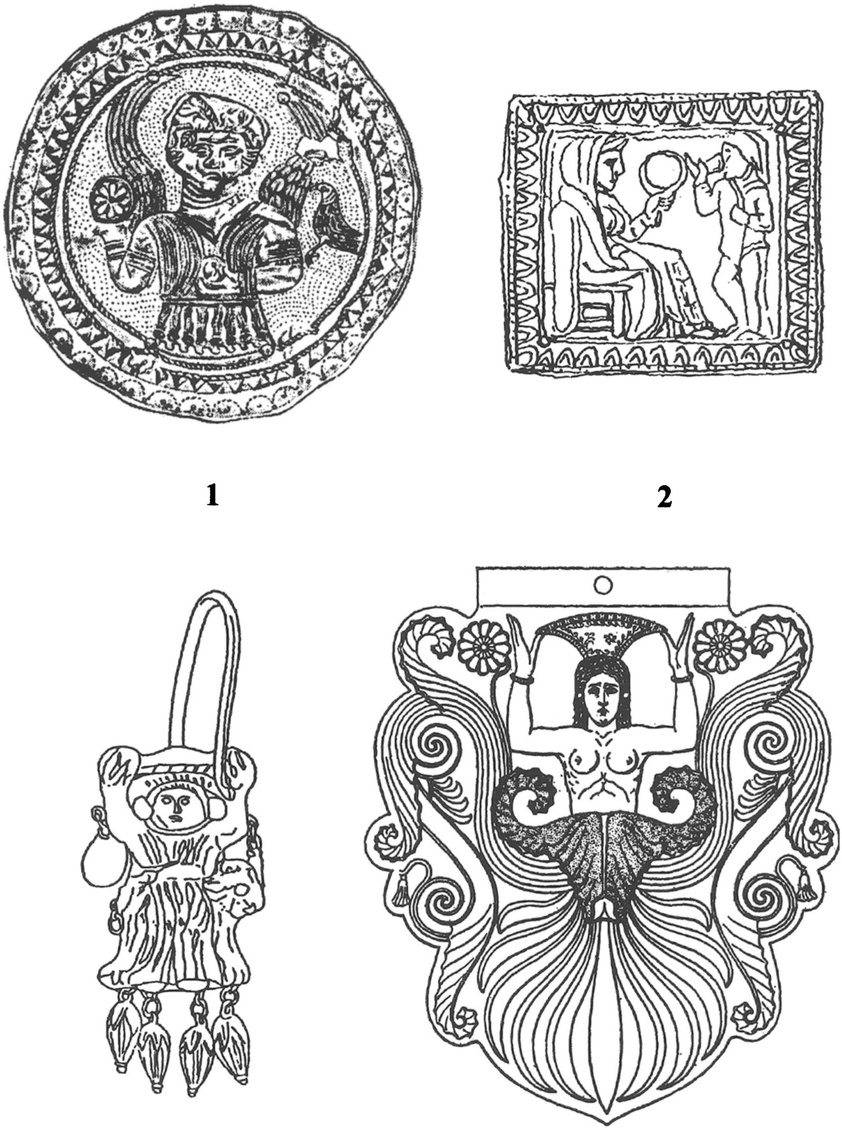


Plate 8.1. Silver gilded phalera from Yanchokrak. 2. Gold pendant from the Chertomlyk tumulus. 3. Temple-pendant ("earring") from the Mastyuginskiy tumulus. 4. A fragment of a silver plate from the Chertomlyk tumulus.

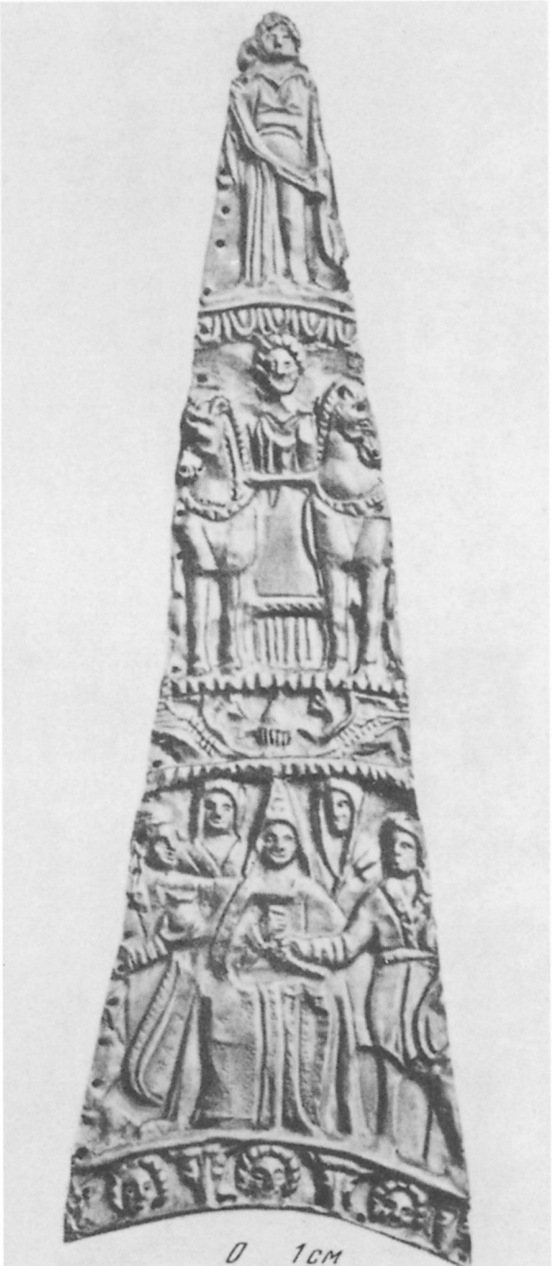
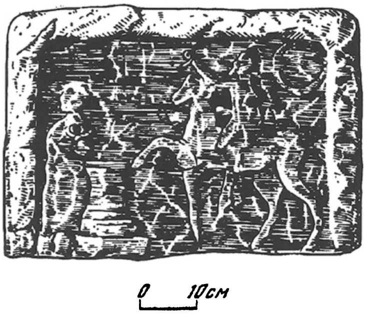
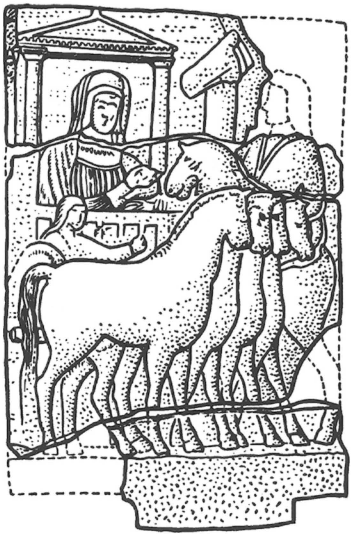


Plate 9. Gold plate from the Karagodeouashkh tumulus.



1



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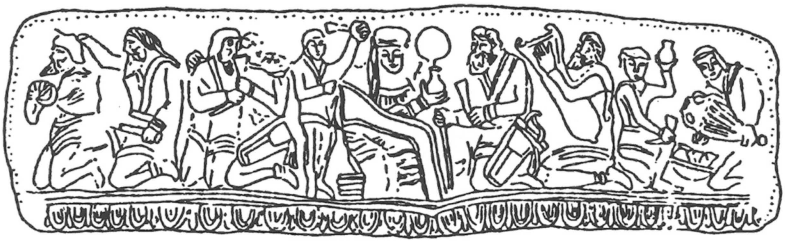

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Plate 10.1. Relief from the site of Chayka. 2. Stele from the Trekhbratniy tumulus. 3. Gold plate from Sakhnovka.

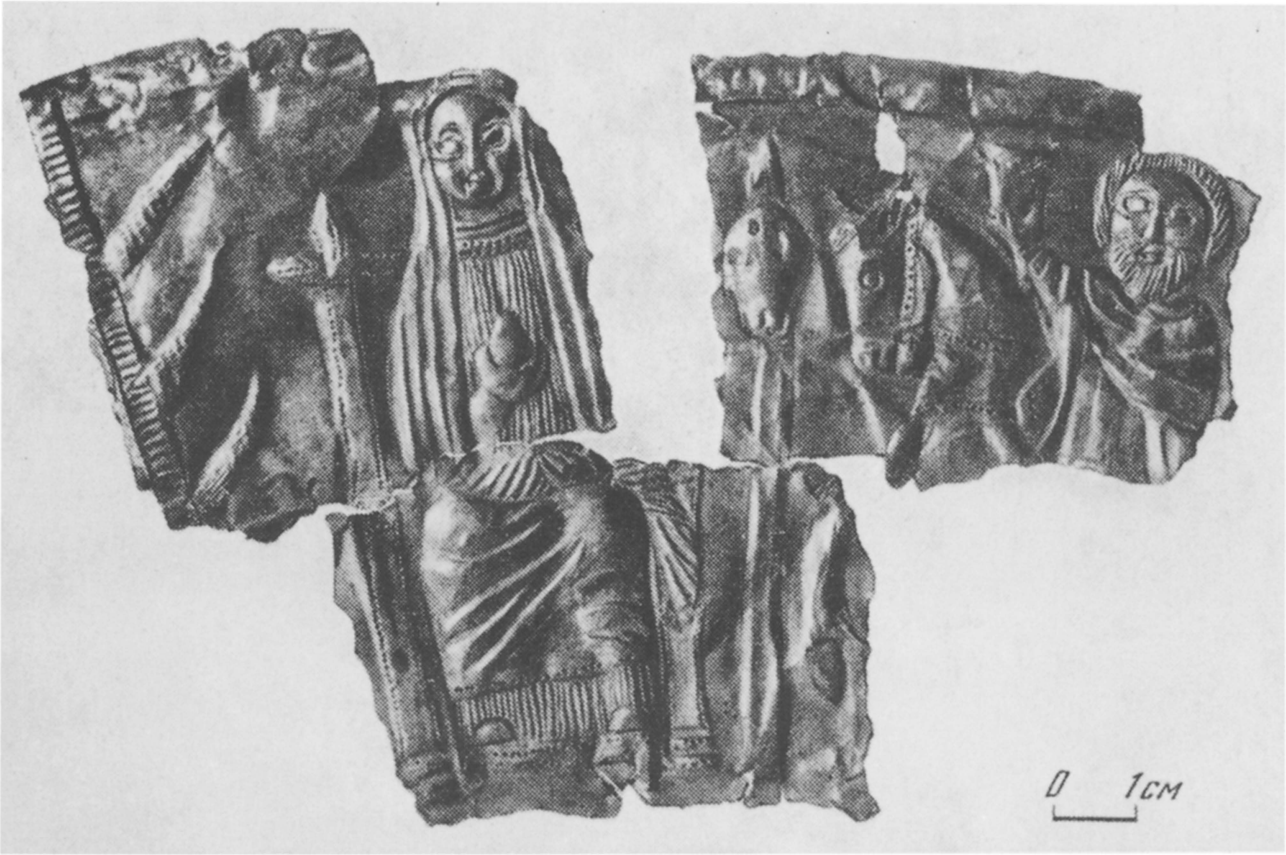
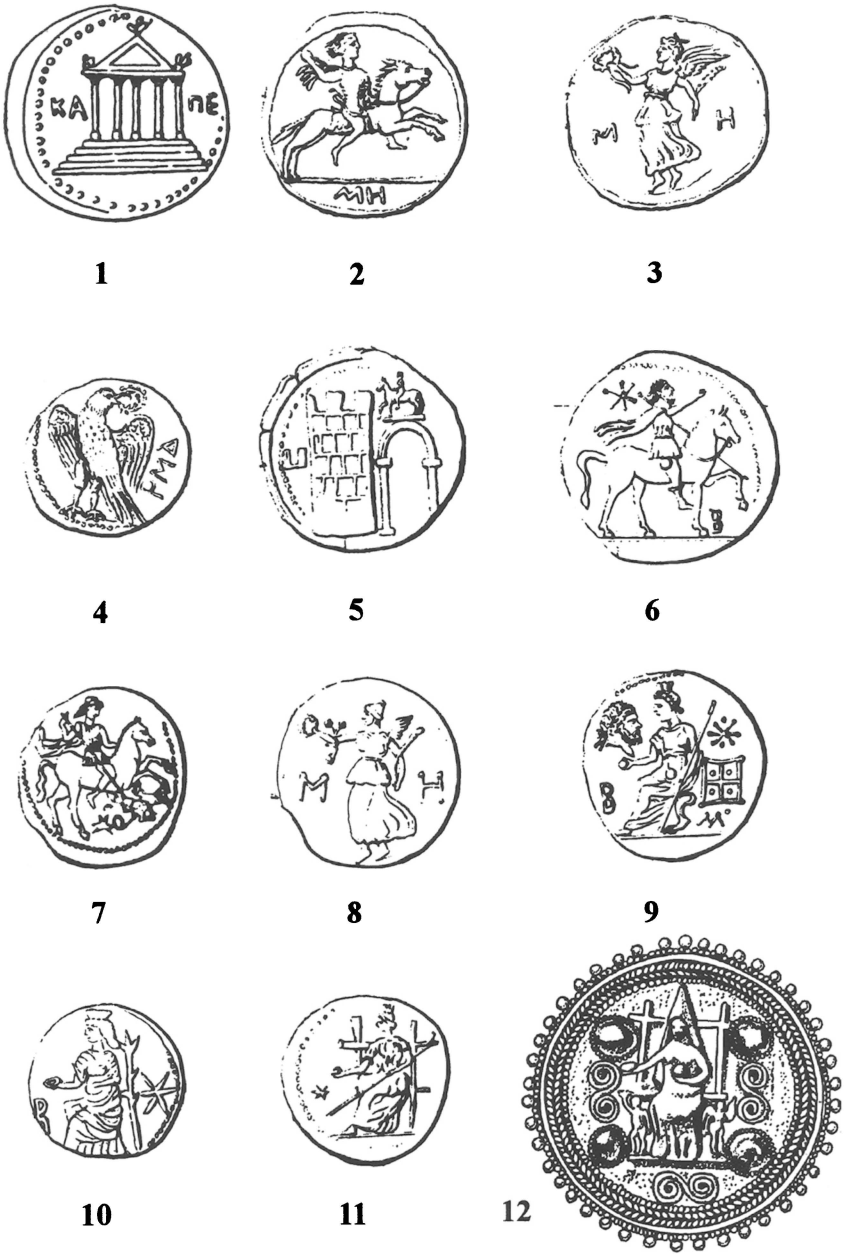


Plate 11. Rhyton from the Merdzhany tumulus (gold and silver).


ΚΑ
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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Plate 12.1–11. Bosporan coins. 12. Gold medallion from the Kuban area.

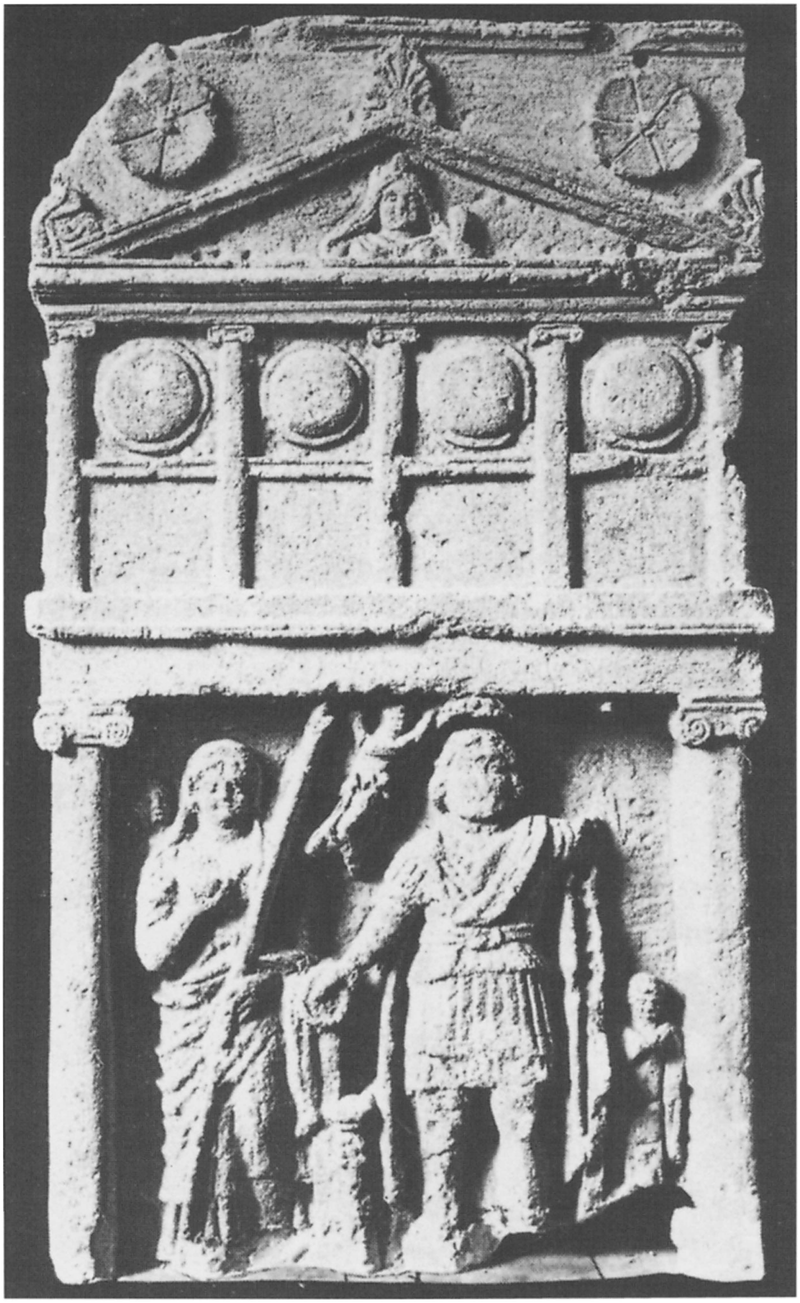


Plate 13. The stele with the five-column temple.

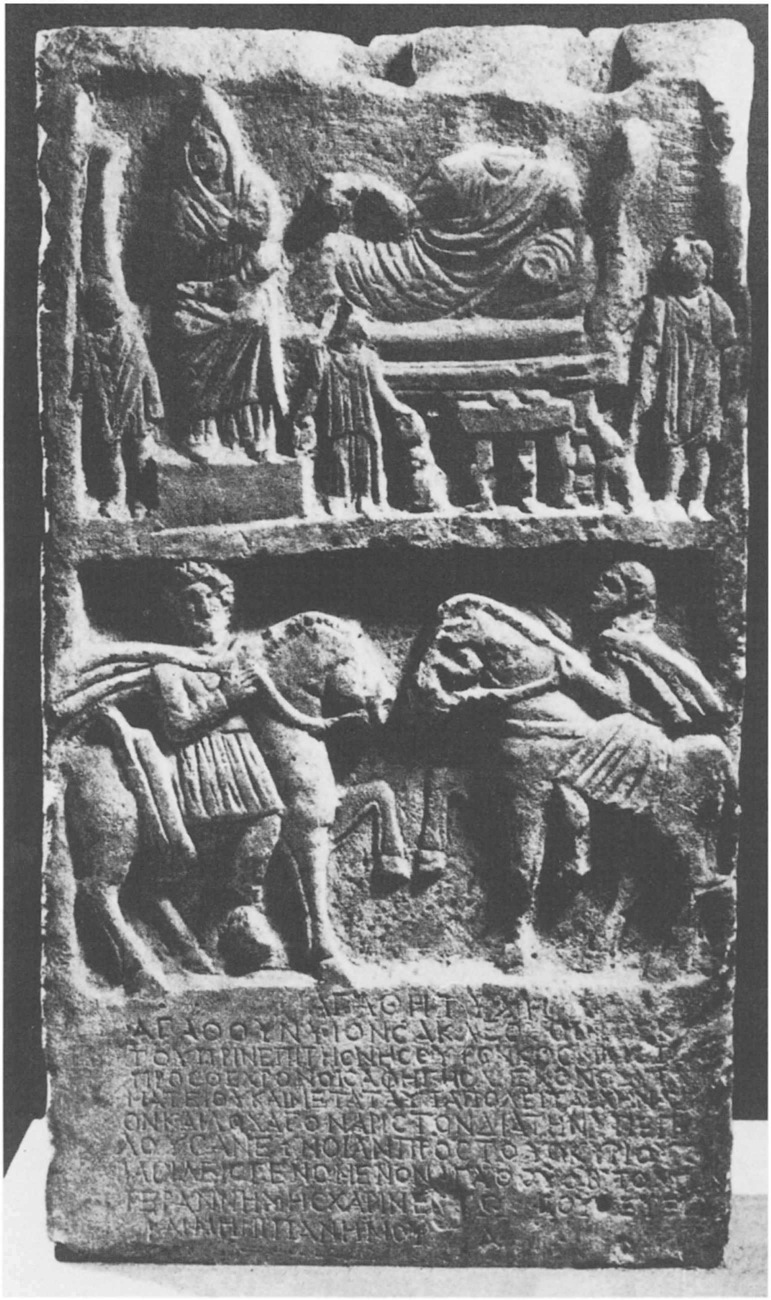


Plate 14. Agathous' gravestone (*CIRB* 1000).

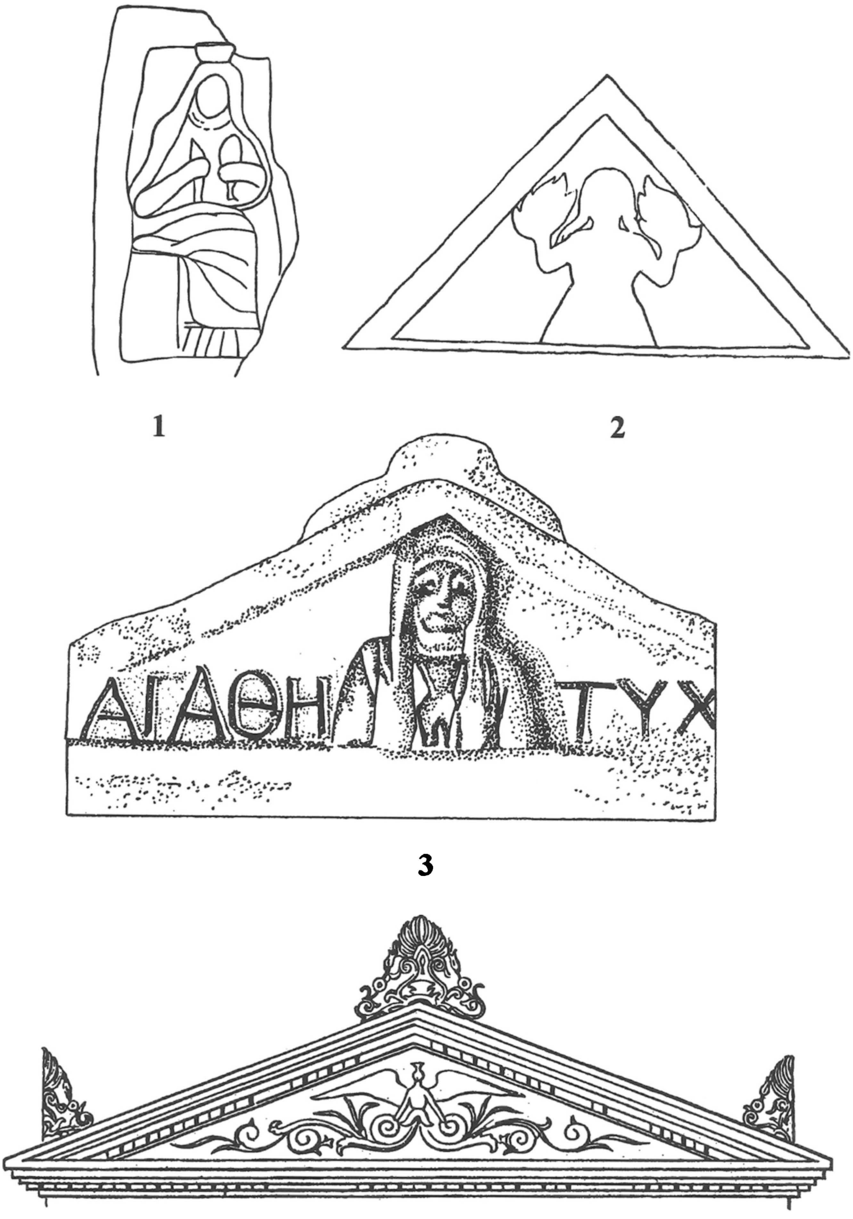


Plate 15.1. Relief from Tanais. 2. Tombstone from Panticapaeum: the gable. 3. Stele from Tanais: the gable. 4. Sarcophagus from the Taman: the gable.

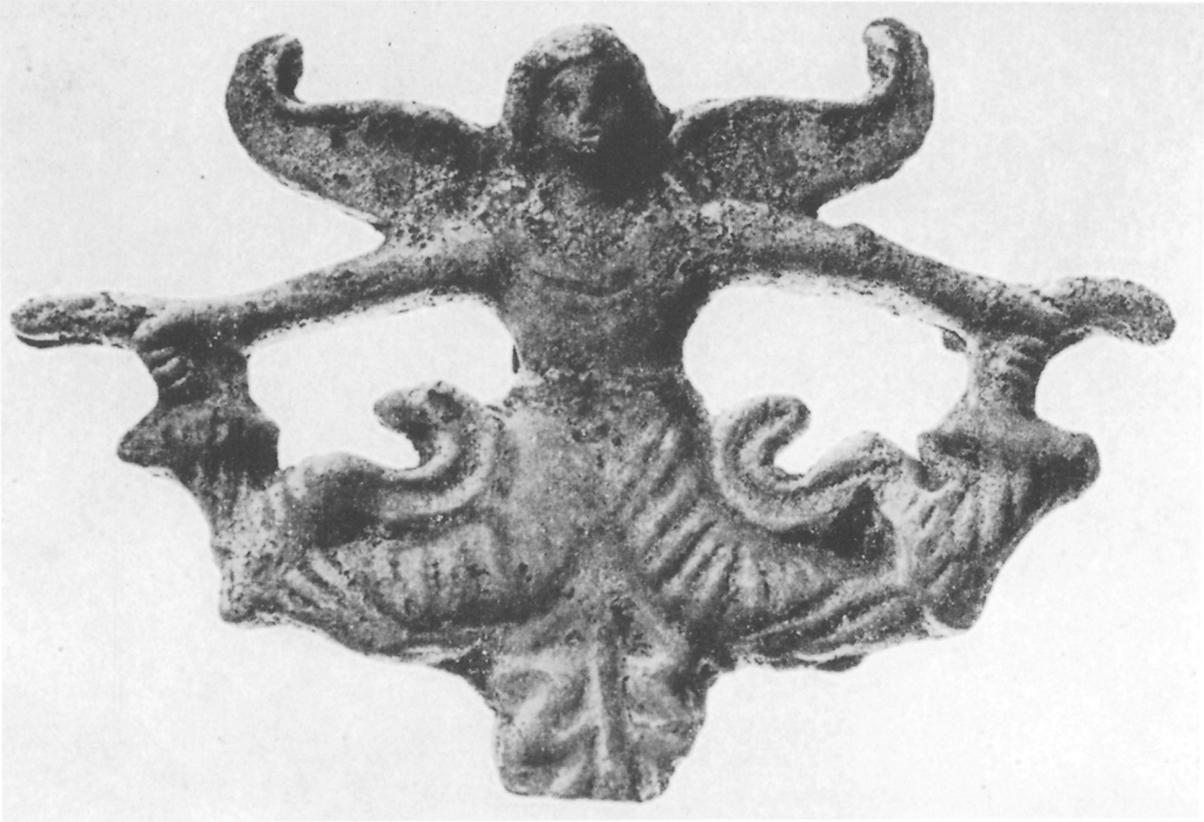


Plate 16. Plaster decoration of a sarcophagus. Panticapaeum.

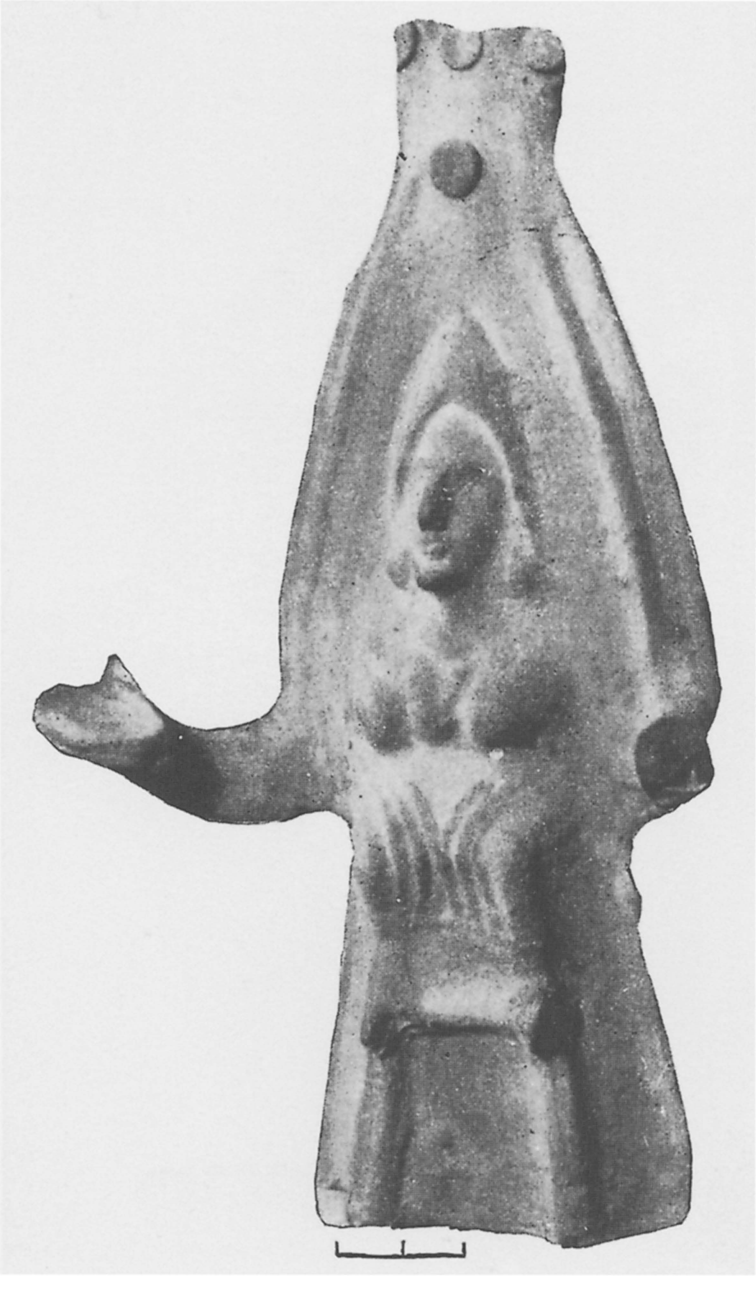


Plate 17. A seated goddess. Terracotta. The site of Tasunovo. First–second centuries AD.

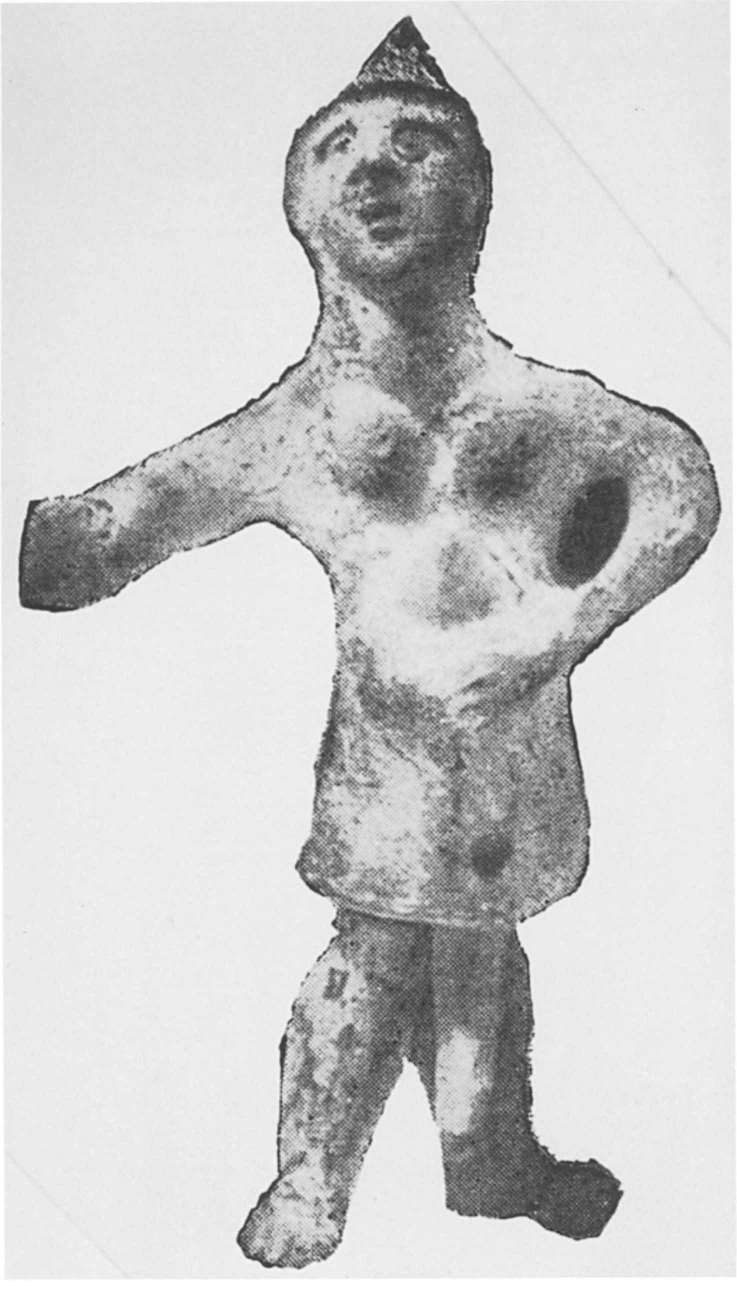


Plate 18. Jointed figurine. Terracotta. Second–third century AD. Panticapaeum.

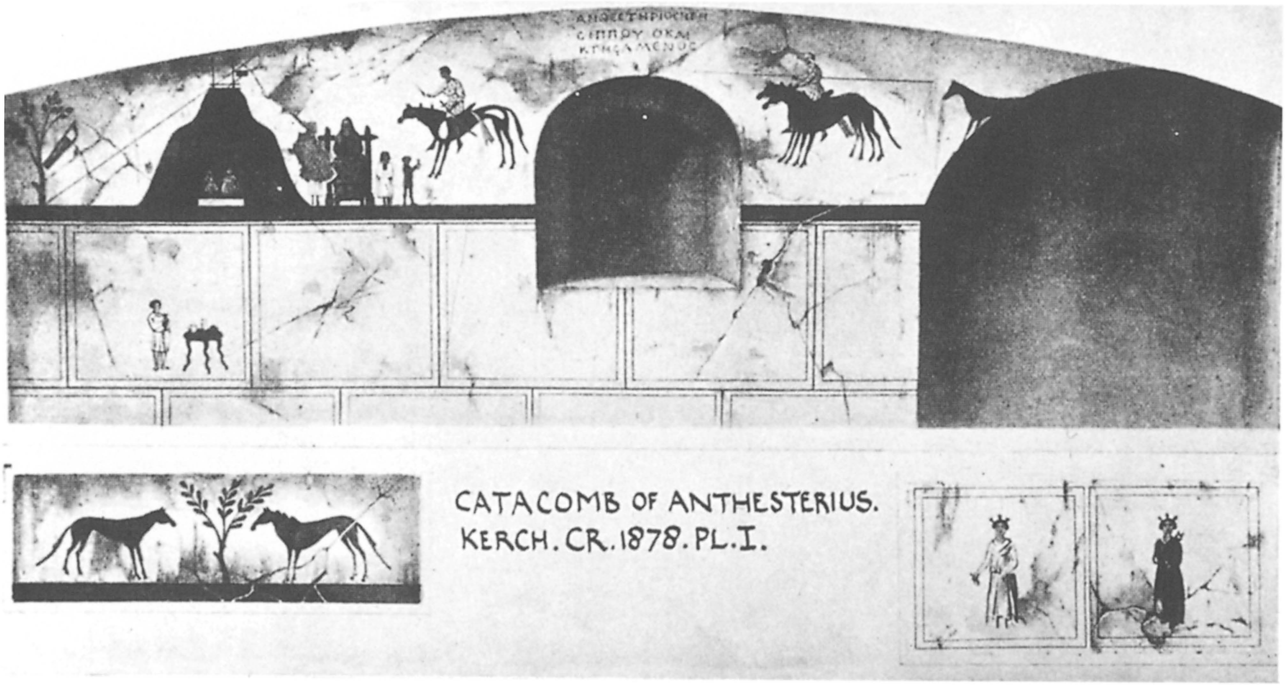

CATACOMB OF ANTHESTERIUS.
KERCH. CR. 1878. PL. I.

Plate 19. Painting in the vault of Anthesterios. Detail.

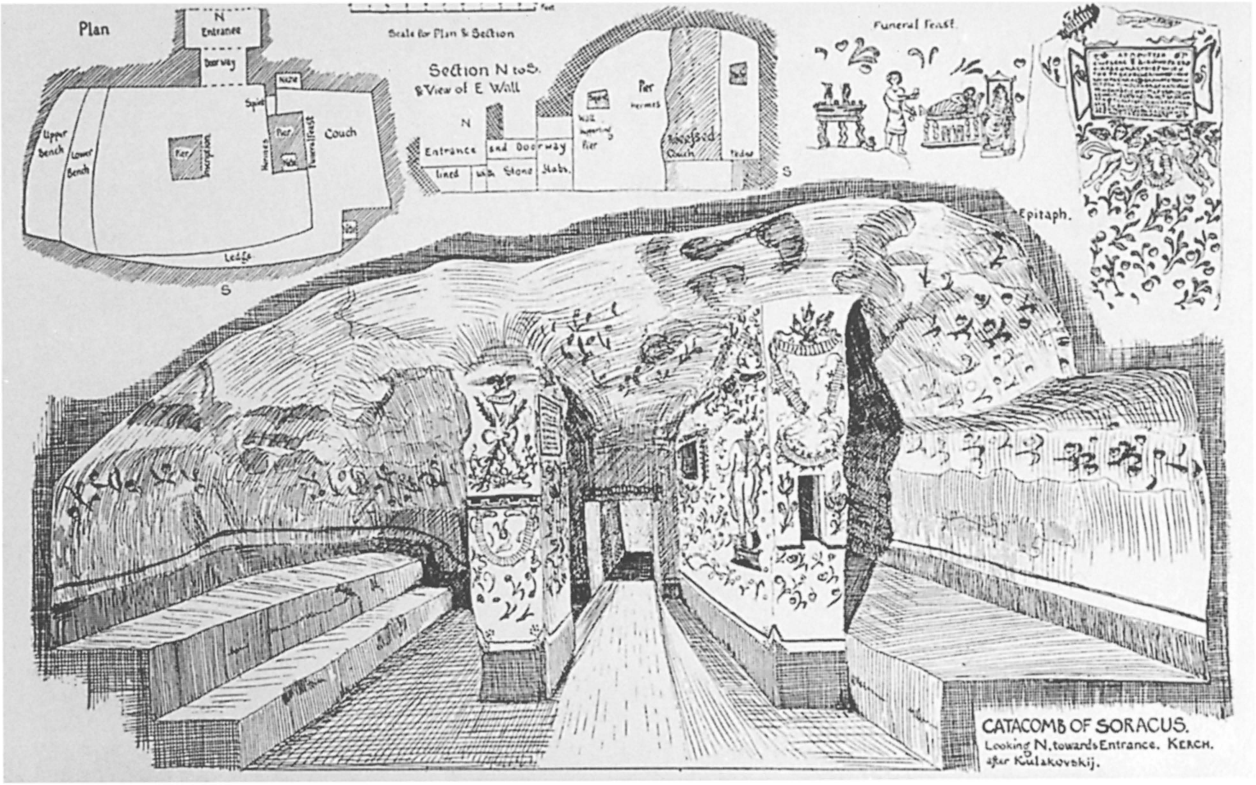

Plan
N
Entrance
Doorway
Niche
Spirit
Upper Bench
Lower Bench
Pier
Inscription
Hermes
Pier
Niche
Funeral feast
Couch
Niche
Ledge
S
Feet
Scale for Plan & Section
Section N to S.
& View of E Wall
N
Entrance and Doorway
lined with Stone Slabs.
Wall supporting Pier
Pier
Hermes
Couch
S
Funeral Feast.
Epitaph.
CATACOMB OF SORACUS.
Looking N. towards Entrance. KERCH.
after Kulakovskij.

Plate 20. The vault of Soracos.

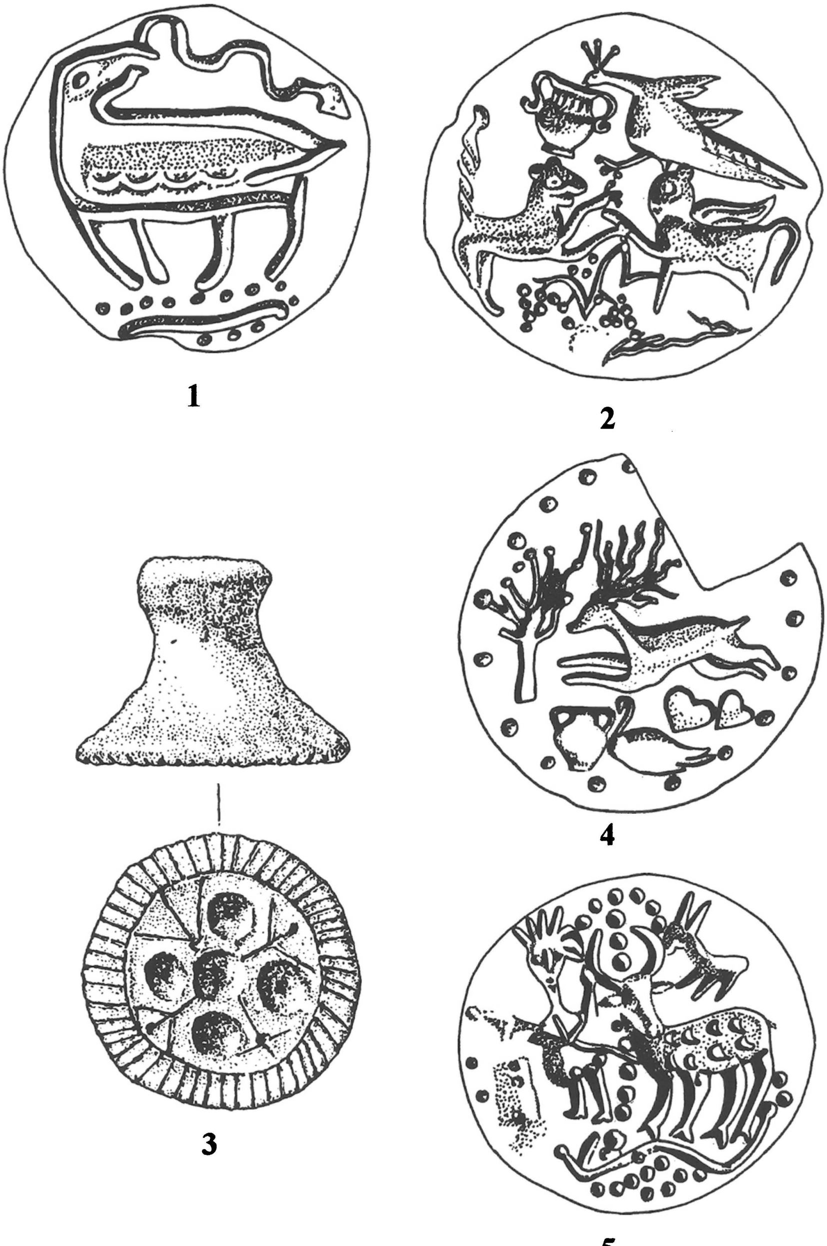


Plate 21.1–2. Clay stamps from Cimmericum. 3. Clay stamp from Tanais. 4–5. Clay stamps from Panticapaeum.

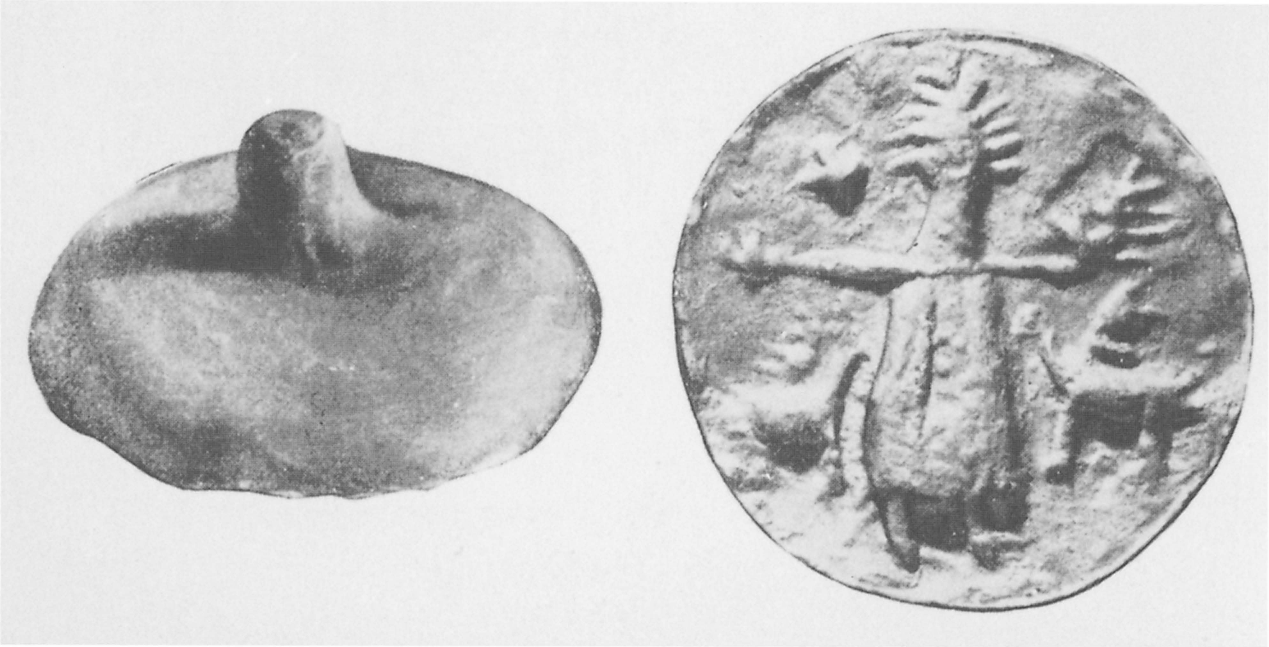


Plate 22. Clay stamp from Ilouratum.

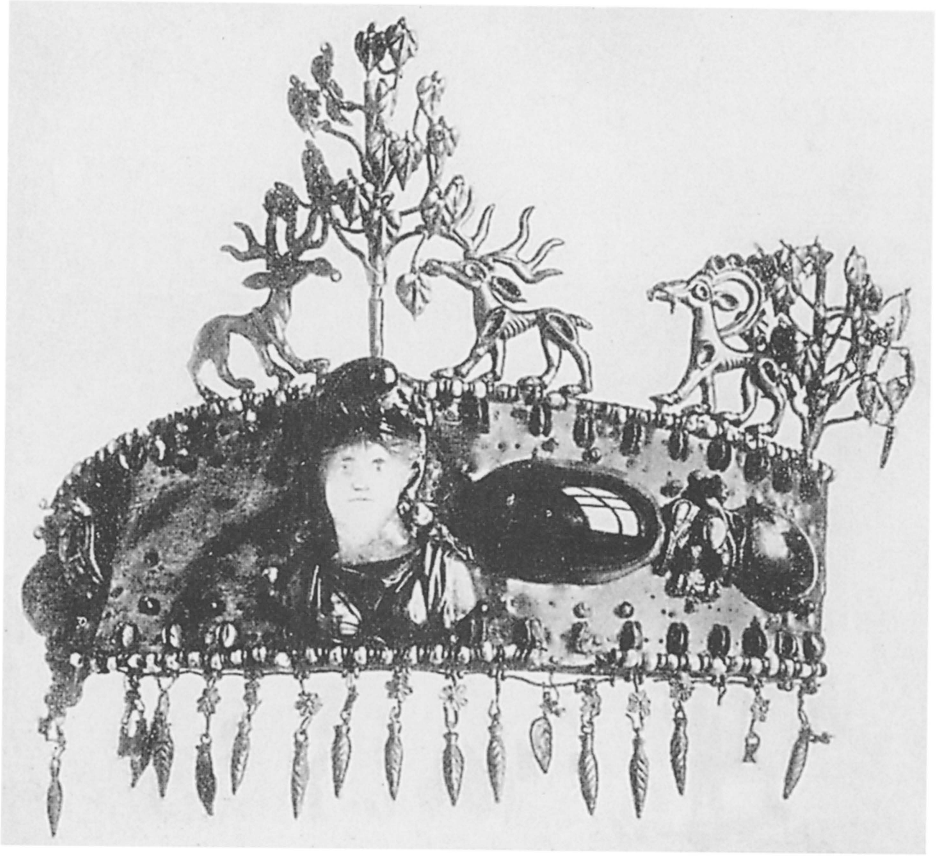


Plate 23. Dold diadem from the Khokhlach tumulus.

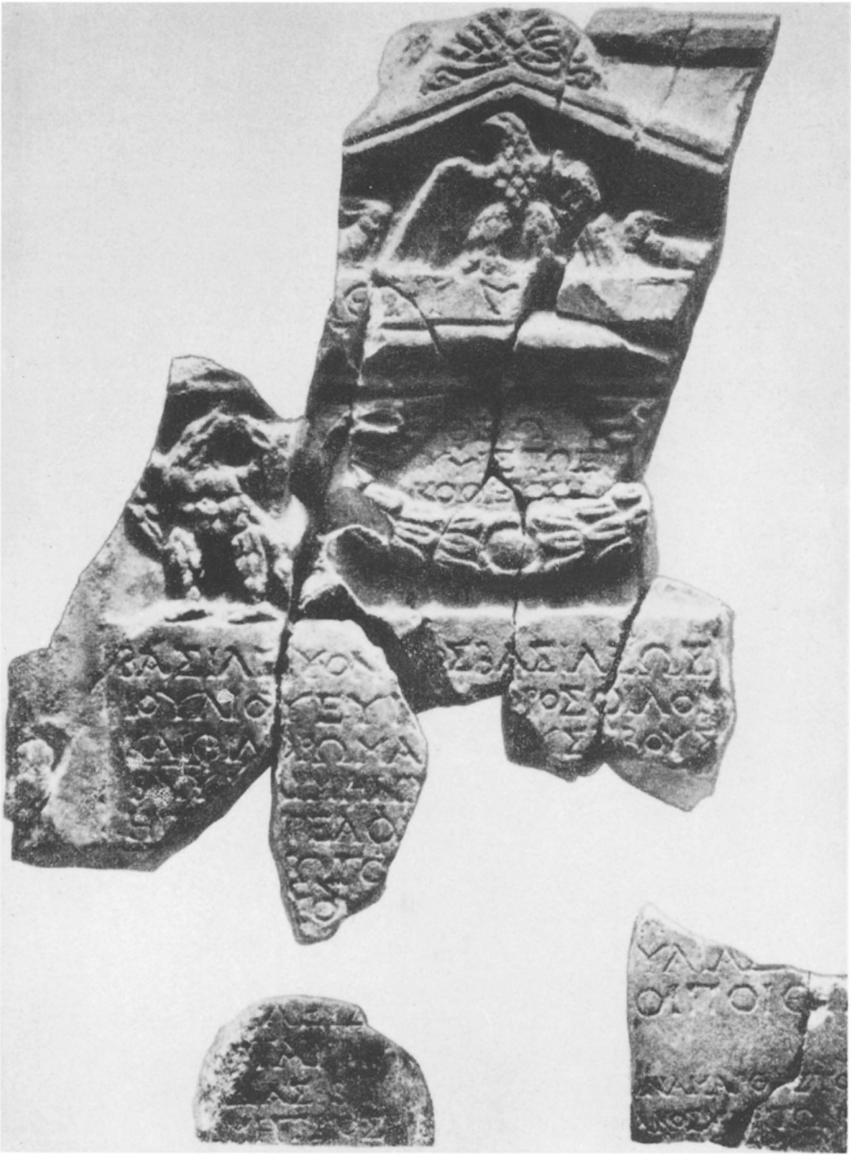


Plate 24. Stele of a Tanais thiasos. *CIRB* 1260.

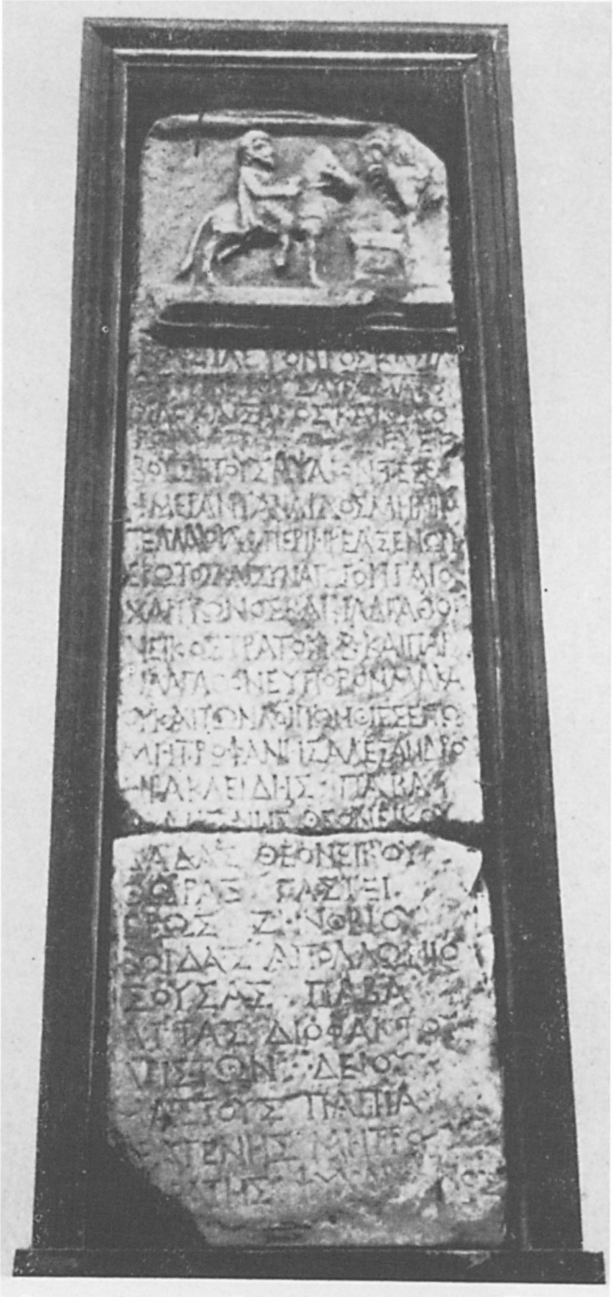


Plate 25. Stele of the thiasotes celebrating the Day of Tanais. *CIRB* 1259.

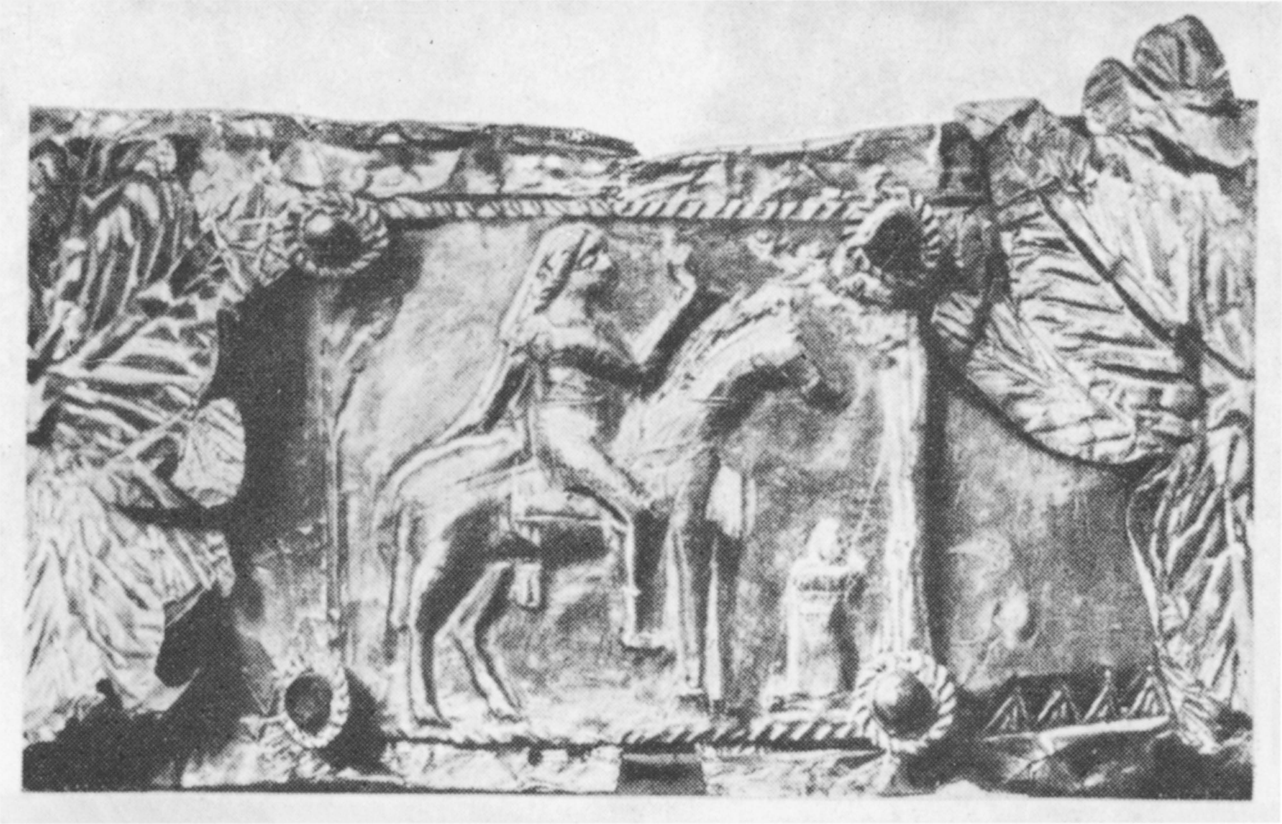


Plate 26. Gold wreath from a royal burial near Panticapaeum.

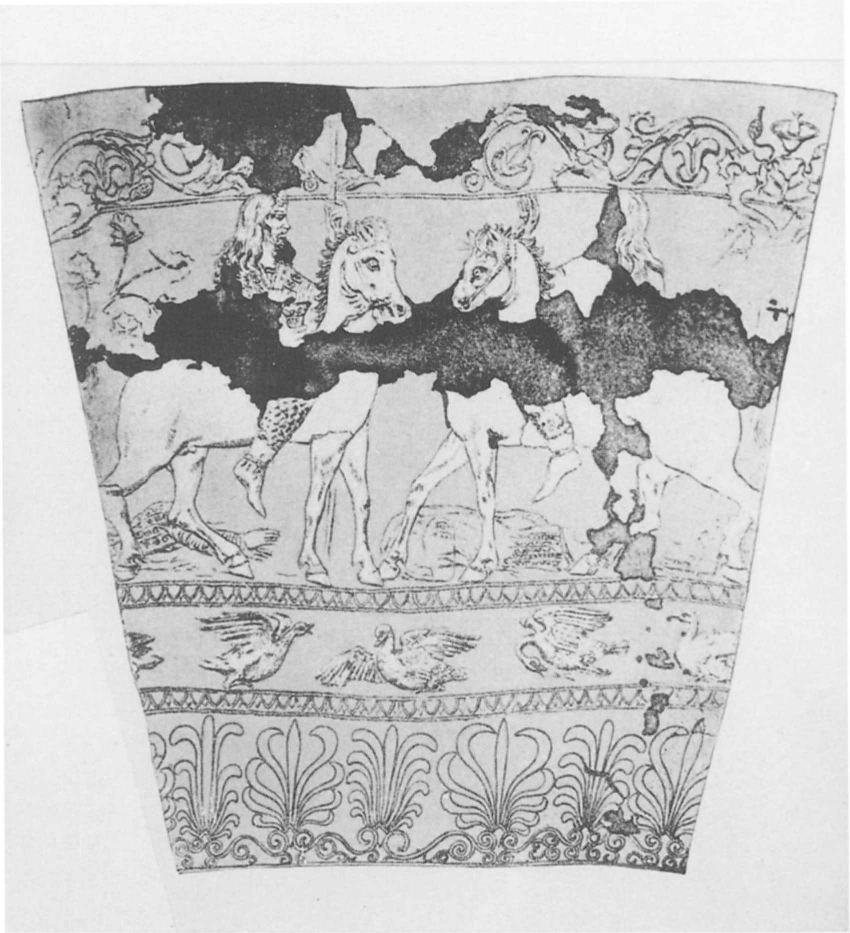


Plate 27. Silver rhyton from the Karagodeouashkh tumulus.

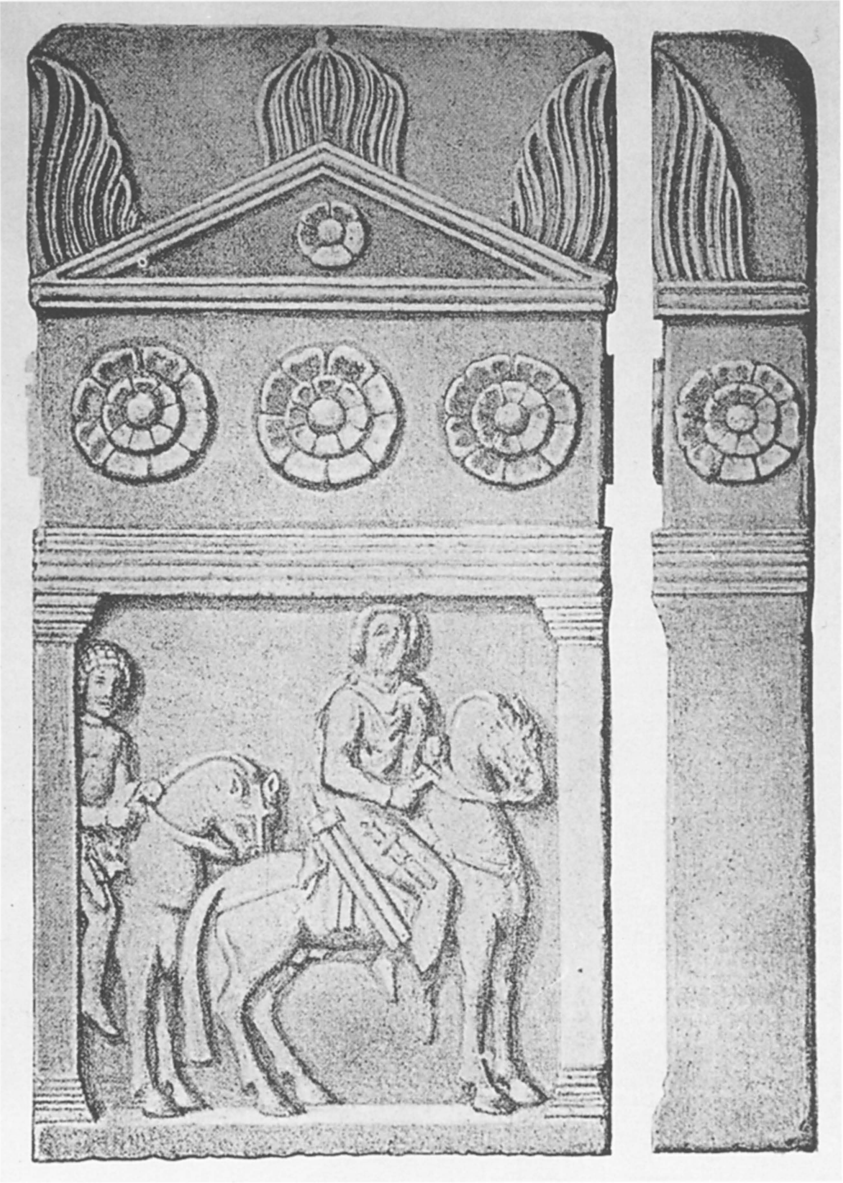
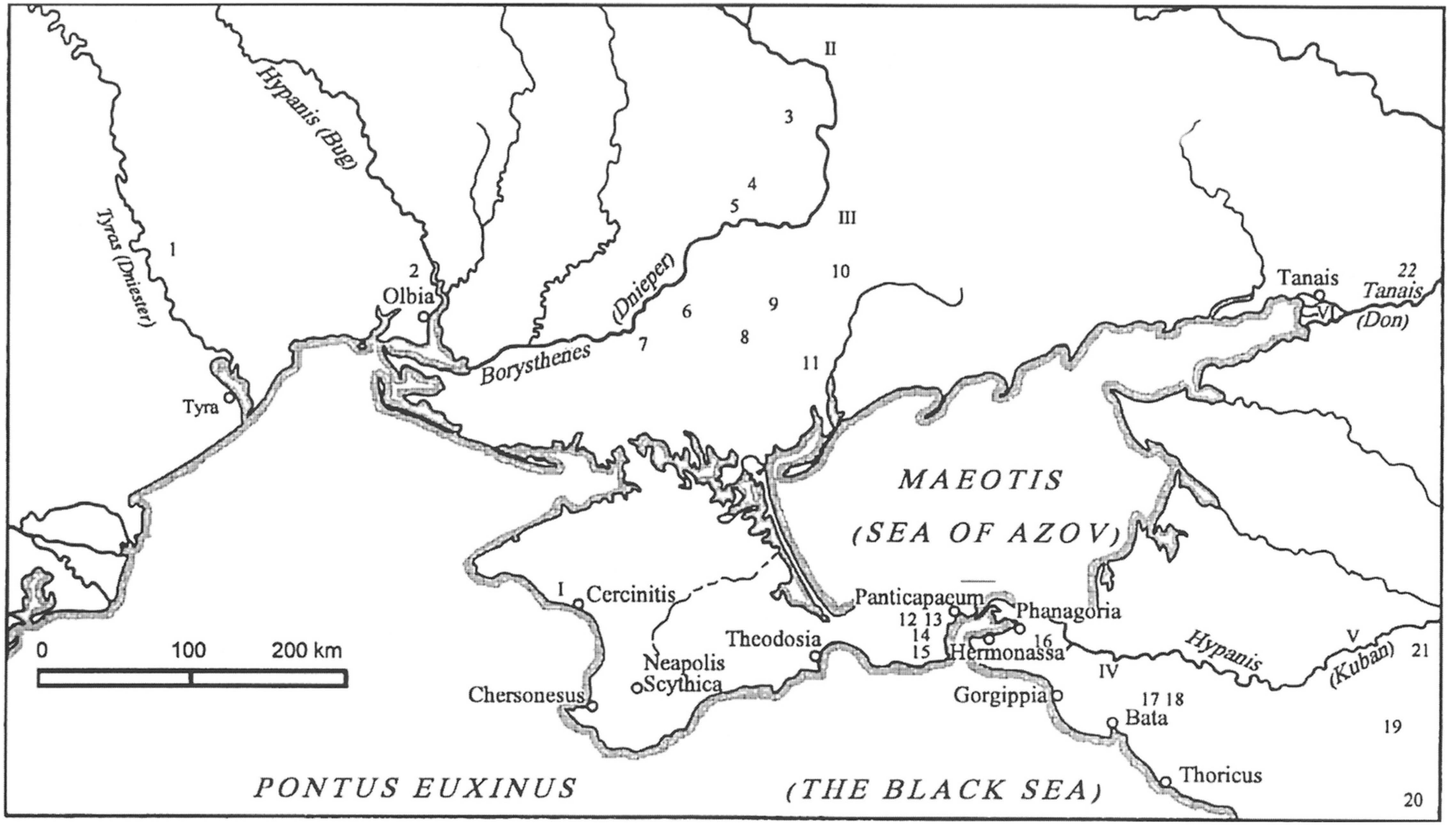


Plate 28. A typical late Bosporan tombstone. *CIRB* 78.


II
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4
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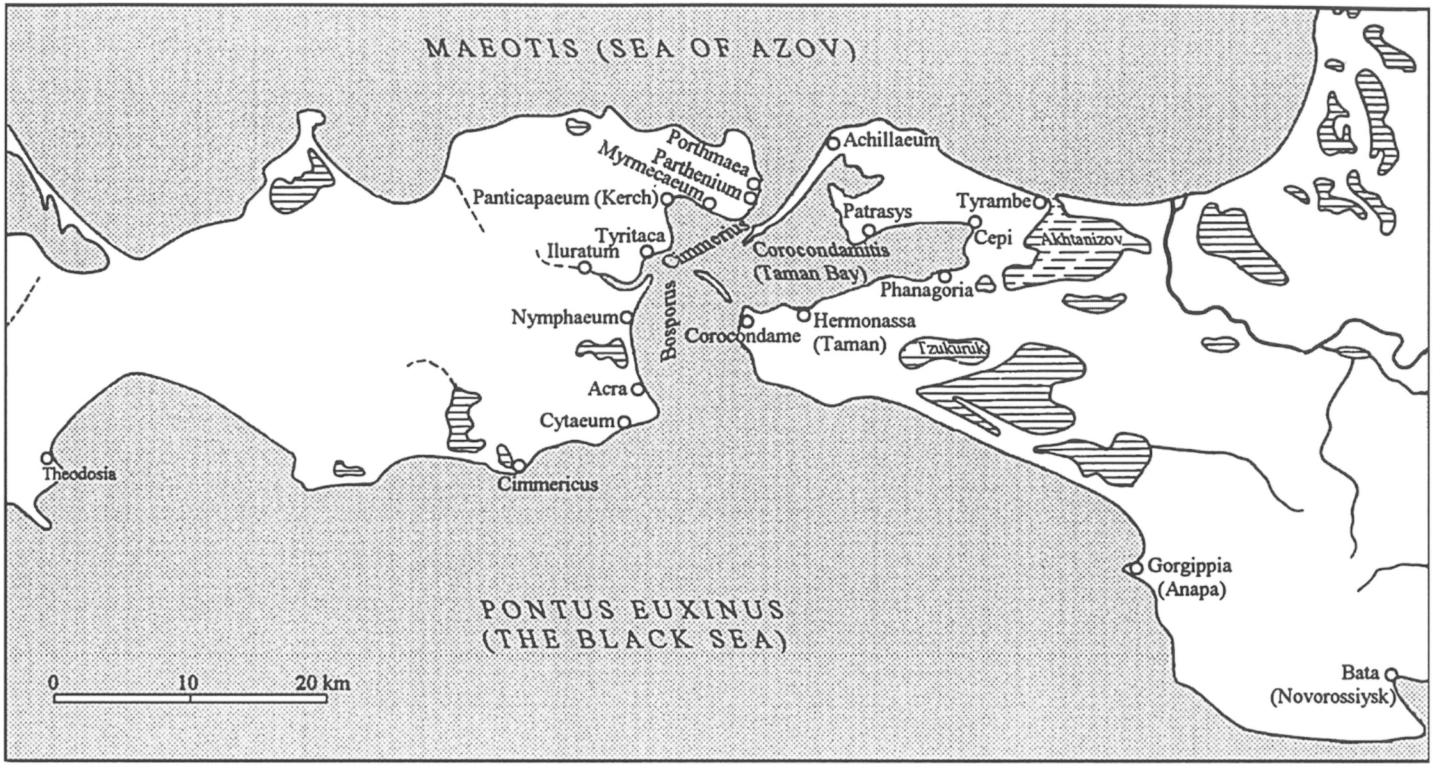
III
10
9
8
6
7
11
1
2
Olbia
Tyra
Hypanis (Bug)
Tyras (Dniester)
Borysthenes
(Dnieper)
Tanais
22
Tanais
VI
(Don)
MAEOTIS
(SEA OF AZOV)
I
Cercinitis
Neapolis
Scythica
Chersonesus
Theodosia
Panticapaeum
12 13
14
15
Hermonassa
16
Phanagoria
Gorgippia
IV
17 18
Bata
Hypanis
V
(Kuban)
21
19
Thoricus
20
0
100
200 km
PONTUS EUXINUS
(THE BLACK SEA)

Tumuli (Arabic numerals):
1-Butory; 2-Sokolova Mogila; 3-Alexandropol'skiy; 4-Tolstaya Mogila; 5-Chertomlyk;; 6-First Mordvinonskiy; 7-Lyubimovskiy; 8-Oguz; 9-Bol'shaya Tzymbalka (Sakhnovka); 10-Gaymanova Mogila; 11-Melitopol'skiy; 12-Kul'-Oba; 13-Pavlovskiy; 14-Yuz-Oba; 15-Trekhbratniy; 16-Bol'shaya Bliznitza; 17-Merszhany; 18-Karagodeouashkh; 19-Kelermes; 20-Kurdzhips; 21-Zubov; 22-Khokhlach.
* Other indigenous sites (Roman numerals):
I-Chayka; II-Lysaya Gora; III-Yanchokrak; IV-Sem' Brat'yev (SemiBratneye); V-Ust'-Labinskaya; VI-Elizavetovskoye.

Map 1. The Northern Black sea littoral


MAEOTIS (SEA OF AZOV)
Porthmaea
Parthenium
Myrmecaeum
Panticapaeum (Kerch)
Tyritaca
Iluratum
Cimmerius
Bosporus
Nymphaeum
Acra
Cytaeum
Cimmericus
Theodosia
Achillaeum
Patrasys
Tyrambe
Cepi
Akhtanizov
Corocondamitis
(Taman Bay)
Phanagoria
Hermonassa
(Taman)
Corocondame
Tzukuruk
Gorgippia
(Anapa)
Bata
(Novorossiysk)
PONTUS EUXINUS
(THE BLACK SEA)
0
10
20 km

Map 2. The Bosporus